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ABSTRACT

Fifteen selected papers are presented from the Australian College of Education's twenty-first annual conference, held in May, 1980, which focused on politics in education. The first four papers discuss educational equity, covering the problems of educational policy, equality, disadvantaged rural children, and women. The next two articles consider education's financial accountability, particularly in the context of Australian state-federal relations, while two further papers bring in the associated topic of social accountability and the alleged success or failure of Australian education. Six articles then examine educational decision-making in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, including the issues of local-versus-federal control of schools and parental participation in school decisions. The concluding paper summarizes the conference's main themes and points out future needs in relating theory to experience. (Author/RW)

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POLITICS IN EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Some very good papers given at the Australian College of Education twenty-first annual conference in May 1980 including some which are mentioned in the concluding address have not been included in this volume. When space is limited some choice — difficult choice — has to be made.

The selected papers are relevant to the topic of politics in education in different contexts. A good way to read this book, therefore, is to begin at the end by reading Harold Silver's Concluding Address. Here the themes and lines of thought of the Conference are reflected upon by an acute and involved observer from the United Kingdom. To read other addresses in light of this commentary heightens their significance, their relation to the theme and to one another.

The discussion by Greg Hancock on Equity in Schooling besides illuminating policy questions began a debate on the relationship between the concepts of equity and equality which continued throughout the conference until Silver was able to have the final word. In his address on the Context of Educational Equity Michael Herriman makes his philosophical contribution to that debate. Shirley Randell provides a very different approach in The Disadvantaged Country Areas Program: A Program Designed to Increase Social and Educational Equity for Rural Children. In Education and the Women's Movement in Australia Denise Bradley deals with another one of the issues which are concerned with the rights of persons. She criticizes the educational community and considers why there has been so little action on women's issues.

Don Steele Craik begins discussion on a different, although related, political question in Issues of Financial Accountability in the Australian Education System. Jim Allen's paper on State/Federal Relationships in Education follows appropriately because he is concerned with the financial responsibilities and resources of governments.

The third of the major themes of the conference is introduced by an address by Roger Scott on Issues of Social Responsibility. Mal Hewitson then discusses Social Accountability and the School System: A Theoretical Exploration of Issues.

The next five papers are all concerned with decision-making. Grant Harman's paper is "Exploring Politics in Education: Some Barriers and Some Theoretical Considerations". Peter Boag's description of Levels of Decision-Making: A New Zealand Perspective and Roy Adam's Local Control of Schools: Lessons from the United States provide helpful contrasts and comparisons from overseas systems of education. Kevin Collins' Victorian Developments in Levels of Decision-Making and John Cusack's Processes of Decision-Making in the Government School Sector in South Australia are both descriptive but quite different in their method of approach. In Patterns of School Decision-Making William Coppell and Bernard Henry discuss parent and community participation in school decision-making within the broader framework of involvement in education.

FOREWORD

When in 1978, the Queensland Chapter started planning the 1980 Conference, the Conference theme that was then predicated was viewed with some alarm. Was "Politics in Education" an appropriate theme? Should the College address such issues? Was it seemly for a professional organisation to delve into politics? These questions were earnestly asked and calmly answered. The result is now recorded in the pages that follow. The Conference was successfully conducted, critical issues were addressed and in a word, the College and the educators associated with it matured in the process. Above all, I believe that the Conference marked a turning point in attitude for no longer can the discussion of education in its political context be regarded as unacceptable or unprofessional.

This does not mean that the Australian College of Education has suddenly undergone a metamorphosis and become an activist political lobby. But it hopefully does mean that more and more the College and its members will address social policy and planning issues in a rational and deliberative way. The Conference papers included in this volume set a standard of considered judgement and rational analysis of the policy options available that is noteworthy. However, as Harold Silver points out in his splendid Concluding Address, there is still much to do in relating theory and experience. In this context the challenge to us all to be more open, to demystify our practice, to articulate why we believe what we are doing is appropriate in clear, easily understood terms is plain. Let me conclude by reinforcing Harold Silver's closing wish that the momentum of discussion and action engendered at the Brisbane Conference should go on and add the hope that those who now read these papers for the first time will also be stimulated to grapple with the important issues raised in the decade ahead.

P. B. Botsman

Brisbane

June 1980

EQUITY IN SCHOOLING: A PRACTICAL LOOK AT A POLICY PROBLEM

G. HANCOCK

Equity as a Basis for School-level Education Policy

Defining and interpreting equity is a perennial in the social policy analyst's repertoire. On the education score, a recurring note is how far policy and program developments do in fact promote equity objectives. In particular, what progress is to be made towards which targets and with what sorts of instruments.

Questions of educational equity cannot, of course, be dealt with apart from considerations of the role of schooling in relation to social equity generally. Our present situation is characterised by:

(i) a continuing wide disparity in educational benefits despite the significant democratisation of education over recent years.

(ii) chronic concentration of education, labour market and general socio-economic disadvantage in particular groups: a phenomenon underlined by the current economic malaise

(iii) selection into positions of power and status being increasingly performed through formal educational certification and credentialling procedures

(iv) lack of co-ordination between public policy measures in education and those in other areas of social concern.

The concept of "equity" and a key aspect of it, "equality", are often used rather loosely in the education field, connoting as they do notions of fairness and justice. These notions pervade diverse, and sometimes conflicting, policy arenas. There is a need for coherent, situation-specific analysis of the meanings of equity in order that policy options, program and institutional appraisals, and so on can be thought about clearly. Our thinking might be furthered by formulating responses to four questions that underpin equity considerations:

Equity for whom?
Equity of what?
Which principles apply?
How to assess?

The group, the focus, the rationale and the measure — all four must be considered together in order to describe a particular equity strategy and to examine its status.

Thus the case for developing an equity framework for school-level education and for using it to guide policies and programs rests on the fact that the more pressing public concerns, insofar as education is concerned, have to do ultimately with questions of equity: multicultural education,

provision for low achievers and for talented children, and the public/private school nexus, are but three contemporary issues whose resolutions are dependent on our sharpening our thinking about equity, and on making it operational. This is the purpose of these notes.

The pertinence of this effort is the more obvious when we recognise that we are in an era of redistributing existing resources for schooling rather than of allocating additional ones. This has been brought about by changes in the economic climate, in attitudes towards schooling, and in the demographic situation. General belt-tightening coupled with a prevailing air of scepticism about the effectiveness of schooling make it imperative that we understand the factors relevant to determining equitable educational resource provision. More optimistically, if the widespread (if only temporary) decline in pupil enrolments does lead to a freeing up of some currently used educational resources, we must have ready responses to the question of how they might be redeployed if they are not to be lost to school-level education.

What does being fair and just mean in practice:

(i) giving the same amount of schooling to everybody?

(ii) bringing everyone to at least a basic plateau of competence? Or to his or her full potential? Or to the point where marginal rates of additional learning are identical?

(iii) providing equal opportunity for access to schooling?

(iv) ensuring proportional receipts by relevant social groups in the benefits of schooling?

In developing educational policies, choices must be made which depend, explicitly or otherwise, on particular interpretations of equity. Sometimes, desired policy goals may not be simultaneously attainable — they may become mutually contradictory, as can be in the case of the economic and cultural dimensions of equity. In addition, there are other policy considerations besides those of fairness to be borne in mind: freedom, efficiency, and practicability. Hence some equity ideals are not always for the real world.

The usual targets of educational equity measures are the children who receive the schooling, and the taxpayers and parents who both benefit from the existence of schooling and bear the burden of paying for it. Although it is the child target group which is dealt with here, it is recognised that taxpayer and parent equity is a vital and related, but another subject. The relevance of taxpayer and parent equity for schooling policy is demonstrable in the current discussion over options for the funding of non-government schools. Each of the following major options has implications for the relative fiscal burden to be carried by Commonwealth versus State governments, by the general public versus the clients, and by the clients of schools of differing resource standards: payments to schools, payments to individuals, and a varied public system. As far as children are concerned, attempts to promote equity through the general extension of educational provision are being increasingly supplemented by a focussed approach towards groups in special need.

Many aspects of schooling can in theory be distributed equitably among pupils. One of the more difficult tasks in assessing the equity of schooling is to find out what it is that we in fact want to have assigned fairly. For discussion purposes, the possibilities fall into two principal categories: resources and outcomes.

The educational services provided through schooling are often described in expenditure terms, a convenient proxy for the real resources distributed among pupils. Even at this apparently simple arithmetic level, however, a number of significant decisions have to be made about what represents legitimate educational outlays (e.g. current operating expenditures? capital works budgets? transportation? maintenance and debt servicing? infrastructure costs?). As an alternative to calculating an expenditure figure on the resources side, a profile of actual services can be made.

For example, the broad pupil/staff ratio statistic could be embellished by subdividing the staff establishment figures into teacher, ancillary staff, administrator and so on. Also, information can be gathered on the nature and scope of the curriculum, thus providing some clues on how educational dollars are transformed via real resources into school programs, and about the efficacy of our pedagogical "know-how". This, then, would necessitate our having information on the quality as well as quantity of the various components of the service under scrutiny.

Thus, regardless of whether a dollar outlay or actual resource measure is employed, there are options to choose from within each. The particular selection can have a significant bearing on inferences drawn about the equity aspects of policies or programs.

A further point relevant to both expenditure and service measures is whether and how to adjust for the allegedly special needs of schools and pupils. For instance, the price of resources can differ across regions and so the purchasing power of the educational dollar is not always equal from one area to another. Also, pupils have varying needs: determining the educational resource implications of these differentials is where we enter the arena of value judgments.

Few would disagree that it is the outcomes of schooling which should be distributed fairly. These are manifested immediately in examination scores, certificates and other credentials. The point is that pupil behaviour can be the focus of interest just as well as the resources which are marshalled to shape this behaviour. Some people argue that a longer term perspective should be taken and that outcomes such as income, job status, or even quality of life should be relevant criteria for judging equity. Even if this is asking too much of schooling on its own, it does raise the question of how such lifetime outcomes — reflecting the ultimate position of a child in the adult world — might be affected by schooling and what can be done about it.

Thus, while there are several bases for assessing whether a school or school system is dealing fairly with (groups of) its pupils, once a specific criterion — such as recurrent cost per pupil or school certificate scores — is chosen, an equity principle must also be adopted and applied in order for

conclusions to be reached about whether the criterion referent — the cost or the examination result — is being distributed fairly. Three equity principles are commonly used to assess whether a service is operating equitably.

The first is that pupils who are alike should receive equal shares. Equity is assessed in this case by measuring the spread of, or inequality in, the distribution of the service: no dispersion would represent perfect equity. If all pupils in a school or system were regarded as being the same, this principle would require uniform expenditure per pupil, pupil/staff ratios, exam results, mastery levels, and perhaps even long term outcomes such as income or status in adult life.

The second principle acknowledges that pupils are in fact different and requires that unequals receive appropriately unequal treatment. Both the nature of the recognised differences and the extent of the differential treatment must be specified. These specifications are often heavily value laden.

Despite the controversy surrounding any identification of "differentness", pupils with handicapping conditions, poverty backgrounds or an inadequate command of English are widely regarded as deserving of favourable treatment. Often, too, particular zone characteristics, such as population sparsity, are admitted as legitimate grounds for special treatment. The relevance of other differences, such as ethnicity or giftedness, is also brought out through this principle: but claims for an above average share of resources on these grounds tends to be more controversial.

While the existence of differences among children is readily admitted, it is not easy to decide on the way in which these differences should be handled equitably at school. Regardless of the policy formulated and the mechanism devised, the unequal treatment of equals principle demands that pupil differences be recognised and accounted for. Four types of target groups can be identified in terms of this principle:

(i) Traditional. For many years educational systems have made special provision in terms of both additional resources and alternative institutional arrangements for meeting the particular needs of pupils having "intrinsic" (i.e. psychological and physical) problems. Special programs are politically and socially accepted.

(ii) Socio-economic. These are defined by social and economic criteria (i.e. "extrinsic" to the individual) which limit potential for performing satisfactorily in mainstream schooling.

(iii) Ethnic. Increasingly groups are being identified within the community on the basis of "ethnic" (i.e. cultural, racial or immigrant) characteristics which present particular educational difficulties. While some of these concerns are similar to those for the so-called low socio-economic under-performers, others relate to the preservation of linguistic and cultural distinctiveness.

(iv) Structural. The organisation and functioning of schools as institutions can sometimes leave groups insufficiently catered for. For example, "structural" changes over the past fifteen years to the secondary school (i.e. comprehensivisation) are thought by many to mean that gifted

and talented pupils are not being sufficiently well provided for: thus a target group — defined in terms of absence of adequate provision for the gifted and talented — is re-emerging.

The third principle embraces the concept of equal representation. In pure terms, this means that there should be no disparity in participation or performance among groups according to "educationally neutral" characteristics such as wealth, race, or sex.

Four distinctive styles of provision seem to have developed out of efforts to meet these three general equity principles:

(i) Provision to achieve "territorial justice" by equalising the capacity of areas to have educational services of an appropriate standard.

(ii) Provision to encourage greater participation in educational offerings by under-represented groups.

(iii) Provision to supplement the regular curriculum for target groups.

(iv) Provision for alternative educational experiences for target groups.

The analytical framework described here may be useful both in developing and in reviewing policies, because choices have to be made about the groups to focus on, about distinguishing among pupils, and about program structures processes and so on.

It is not sufficient to identify special populations merely as linguistic minorities, people with physical or mental handicaps, or groups who are culturally distinct: it is also necessary to specify the criteria for participation in programs designed to meet particular needs. These criteria can be directly educational (e.g. poor performance), but are more often based on personal, economic or cultural attributes. The purposes of such programs can range from the elimination of attributes that make the population "special" (e.g. inability to speak and write English) to the preservation and even promotion of these attributes (e.g. ethnic uniqueness; exceptional talents). Between these extremes are such objectives as compensating for (e.g. handicaps) or accommodating to (e.g. cultural pluralism) those characteristics which distinguish the populations. The programs that flow from these diverse policy objectives differ markedly in terms of their structure and the various ways for delivering them to recipients. The nature of the provision, whether through the regular school or through special classes, units and schools, can often be a reflection of whether it is believed that the special population in question has failed to cope with the schools or whether it is the schools that have failed the individuals comprising the group. We must be alert to the equity implications of practices such as parallel streaming and segregating where parity of esteem does not prevail.

The Cultural Dimension of Equity: A Revaluation

Most discussion about equity in education assumes that schooling is a fixed quantity which can be distributed among individuals and groups, some of whom get more of "it" and some less. While there are, of course, overlays superimposed upon this basic economic notion — the quality of schooling (related closely to scale and standard of resources), and the importance

of technical know-how and commitment for the sake of efficiency — it is the cultural dimension of equity that presents most difficulties for public policy.

Schools do in fact cover different ground and employ a variety of approaches. There is a limitless array of skills, knowledge and understandings to draw upon; the structuring of curriculum content is essentially arbitrary; problems may be presented in a host of ways. The social and affective climate varies from one teaching/learning situation to another; and pupils require individualised attention because of their unique backgrounds and attributes. In any case, besides imparting information, developing techniques, and generally trying to educate, the schools also have their allocative, custodial, and socialisation functions.

While much of the foregoing is commonplace, at least in theory, what has not been so universally recognised, at least in practice, is that the differing interests, values, and aspirations of children and parents inevitably lead to differing expectations of schooling. We have already posited that the educational equity debate is concerned with "what is" and "what ought to be" in distributing schooling between religious and ethnic groups, rich and poor, boys and girls, young and not-so-young, bright and not-so-bright, and so on. The disparities between these various groupings are usually measured in terms of access to provisions, allocations of resources, in-school performance, and post-school success. An unstated premise of all this is that schooling will ultimately provide the same benefits to everyone as long as he or she gets enough of it. Herein lies the fundamental weakness in conventional thinking about equitable schooling and is, for example, a major stumbling block in achieving a consensus about the core curriculum.

The variety of norms and behaviour patterns among groups in our society is such as to mark off sets of sub- (or even separate) cultures within it. The traditional prognosis was that most of these deviations would gradually disappear through conformity pressures, especially those emanating from the mass media. However, distinctive characteristics are not only proving resistant, some are reviving — either spontaneously, or with some help from government as a consequence of much lobbying.

The cultural identity of racial groups such as the Aboriginal peoples has always been acknowledged, though not always, of course, to their advantage. This is increasingly so for many migrant groups. Programs flowing from such recognition (e.g. the self determination and multicultural education movements) are beginning to have profound social implications.

Although not quite so specific, some physical areas have economic, social and topographical attributes — such as the Gold Coast, Kimberleys, Huon Valley — which may justify their being thought of as geographically determined sub-cultures (in the general sense of the word).

Even less formally acknowledged, but nevertheless popularly recognised, are sub-cultures corresponding to various social classes. While the lifestyles of industrial and agricultural labourers, clerks, businessmen, professionals and so on have much in common in this country there are many keen differences reflected even in party political affiliation with all its consequences.

Religious affiliations are sufficiently tight to influence many attitudes, including those about schooling. More hotly debated is whether a separate female sub-culture exists in our society: indubitably, boys and girls do present different attitudes in many spheres. Also, groups defined by atypical (especially inferior) performance in school, and thus defined as exceptional (especially "handicapped"), are widely accepted as needing special treatment: yet the full integration of handicapped groups into the educational and social mainstream would require significant changes in general values and attitudes to cope with the confluence of different norms and expectations.

The degree of separateness of the cultural identity of such groups from the mainstream varies markedly, and might even be doubted in some cases. Nevertheless, a recognition that our society contains a number of sub-cultures adds a further dimension to the concept of equity. Any group striving for equitable educational treatment must be sure that the sought-for services are consonant with its interests, norms and values.

In extreme cases, no formal schooling at all might be regarded as better than the kind currently available. Usually, however, groups concentrate rather on influencing the kind of schooling offered them, often by setting up separate schools. This raises questions about the role and significance of the public interest, and about the obligations of the public purse to subvent such alternatives.

Some religious groups have established extensive separate systems of education for their children. To a somewhat lesser extent a number of ethnic groups do the same with their private and "Saturday" schools. Segregated schools for girls and boys are still seen as having a role to play by some quarters. Handicapped children are often still enrolled in special schools or segregated units within ordinary schools. While this may help to maintain the cultural identity of particular groups (whether the children in these groups wish for such preservation or not) it could at the same time reduce their chances of success at least in the usual terms. Now whether this is true for separate schooling for, say, girls or the handicapped is a moot point: it is certainly obvious for those in schools catering for the "lower" ends of the income and ability spectrums.

The apparently simple solution to the cultural dimension of the equity issue — providing each group with its own form of education — is thus not easily reconciled with other dimensions relating to role, status, and power. Policies in education tend to have social coherence and cohesion as major goals: thus, strong arguments are mounted for incorporating special groups into ordinary institutional settings wherever possible.

The assimilation variety of coherence assumes that changes will occur in the "deviant" groups as they adapt themselves to mainstream behaviour. This has been a traditional rationale for the interpolation of handicapped children into ordinary schools, the increased access of girls to all forms of education, the subsidised development of low-capacity regions, and the absorption of ethnic minorities. In contrast, the integration and self-determination approaches accept the differences of minorities and require a variety

of behaviours. It is comomnly felt that this approach represents an ideal — avoiding the negative effects of segregation while maintaining the cultural integrity of the groups concerned — for equity policies in schooling. Just how realistic is this ideal?

One further interpretation of equity is in terms of no individual or group being in a position to exploit another. But assessing the degree of exploitation is difficult: it presupposes basic assumptions about what a "just" allocation of resources in society should be. And if equity is to have dimensions other than the purely economic, there is little guidance to be had as to what weight to put on each of them. When two groups have different value structures, each group may feel that it is being exploited by the other. This complication is especially important in the educational arena which is so concerned with the transmission of values. Individuals and groups are socialised into what is assumed to be a common culture: this implies that some groups may have the value structures of other, stronger groups imposed upon them. Indeed, here may be a predominant form of exploitation.

It is often suggested that minorities should have their fair share in decision-making about the sorts of values and norms which should pervade the schools. But we are not dealing with a melange which can be developed according to some just compromise. (Sub-) cultures differ because, on a number of points, they reject one another's values. They can be more or less tolerant but no one of them can accept indiscriminately all values as being equally preferable and all behaviours as being equally acceptable because, by definition, it would then cease to have an identity.

Hence, the schools cannot be all things to all people. Schools must hold certain values as more valid than others and certain behaviours as more desirable than others. Full integration is thus not a wholly realistic answer to the call for equitable treatment. Cultures, in the general sense in which the term is used here, will eventually conflict even if temporarily they find ways to co-exist peacefully: because cultures try to dominate in order to survive. The outcome is, then, a matter of relative strength in political, economic, and social terms, because there is no objective, practical criterion of distributive justice to serve as a benchmark. This is why, for example, there will be no permanent solution to the issue of public aid to non-public schools and why it cannot, almost by definition, be depoliticised.

All this does not mean that effort to promote educational equity is useless. But it does mean that such effort cannot be mounted in a normative vacuum. Once it is accepted that certain groups are being discriminated in favour of or against, the task is to examine the forms that the discrimination takes and to study possible ways in which it may be reduced or increased as the case may be. In so doing, policymakers have to take account of the multi-dimensional nature of equity. If a group is being discriminated against, the basic requirement becomes to build up its strength. It is a tactical question whether this can best be done through maximising the access of the particular group to mainstream education, through enhancing its bargaining power within the system on matters relating to its operation, or through establishing separate (and perhaps sheltered) parts of the system which can

be responsive to the group's own values. The choice of tactic is not only specific for each group but may change at various stages in the development of any group's fight for its fare share of schooling.

For instance, groups which are gaining more and more leverage in society — such as women and the handicapped — judge that they can achieve most at this stage by using their political influence to change the mainstream school system. In contrast, ethnic and religious minority groups generally try to make gains by obtaining increased control over the particular schools serving their children leaving the larger system unchecked. In a somewhat more diffuse way, particular geographic areas are pursuing the same sort of aim by pushing for more decentralised decision-making within the overall system.

The case of low achievers in schools (the "residual" group) is of special interest as discriminatory treatment due to school performance comes increasingly under scrutiny. It is the value structure of the school system itself which labels individuals as being "slow". Seeking equitable treatment for the whole age cohort implies a major shift in the value structure of schooling which has been traditionally geared to produce "performers". Can it at the same time accept other pupils as equally valuable? In this regard, any consideration of equity must take account of those dimensions regarded as most important to the individuals claiming redress. Of prime concern is their status as a group compared with other groups. For example, access for a few high performing members of a minority group to, say, higher education often means that they become cut off from and lost to their own group. Hence "creaming off" is not an adequate strategy in the eyes of the residual group; for it is an expression of a concept of equity derived from premises acceptable to the dominant mainstream of society.

Themes Underlying the Basic Policy Issues

The inherent tension between special and general educational provision, and the likelihood of contention — pedagogical, fiscal and political — over the establishment of any special provision, arises from the fact that such decisions are based on a particular set of assumptions and value judgments about equity, which in turn influence the formulation of policy and the particular strategy to be employed. But there are usually different strategies to obtain the same policy objectives. Also, as assumption and values change over time, the strategies too are likely to be changed. An analysis of the major themes running through these considerations is a way of drawing out the implications for both policy and practice of various approaches to providing educational services equitably, and is a basis for exploring both alternative means and alternative ends.

Theme A. Identification and Labelling

The recognition of who are in need of special educational treatment changes over time with differing political and social circumstances. These same circumstances also influence the perspective of what such groups need in the way of special provisions for their schooling.

The identification of special groups has, in some instances, resulted in the stigmatisation of individuals; labels, once applied, not only tend to stick but can tend also to determine, according to a 'self-fulfilling prophecy', the limits of an individual's development. The identification of special groups has, also, in many cases, been followed by their separation from their peers in order to provide special schooling tailored to their particular needs. But segregated special schooling can become, in practice, a means of containing rather than remedying the educational difficulties of certain kinds of children. Thus, the principle of maintaining individuals with special needs within the mainstream of the school system is gaining acceptance over that of segregating them. This "least restrictive environment" is advocated to promote a tolerance for differentness among the majority of pupils as well as to diminish the detrimental connotations affecting the few.

But whatever the changes in educational practice, there continues to be a need to identify individual children who require special attention. And however undesirable it is for the individual to be clearly identified, especially since the process of identification consumes valuable resources, it is nonetheless essential for the purposes of both policy and practice that some account be kept of how groups of individuals are actually faring in the educational system.

Thus it is important to examine the issues and implications of why and how groups of individuals are identified (the criteria and process of identification) the practices and the consequences (intended and unintended) for the individual, the group and the school system arising from their identification.

Points to be considered in relation to the identification of special populations would include:

- the application and implications of various criteria used in identifying individuals with special needs — extent to which "identification" and "treatment" are highly specialised and discrete tasks — the extent to which technical criteria also become social definitions;
- the consequences of modifications to any particular mechanism of identification which may be used by the system (for its own benefit) rather than in the interests of the individual — the rights of the individual, both to have special treatment and to not be stigmatised;
- if all children are recognised as having special needs and some groups as meriting special treatment: the effect on the traditional organisation of schools — the need for new and different kinds of resource configurations to ensure that policy changes are accompanied by changes in practice;
- the financial and resource allocation implications of the debate about broad (and loose) versus narrow (and tight) definitions of "specialness" — the organisational consequences of overlapping membership of certain special populations.

Theme B. Rationales for Disbursing Resources Unequally

Prompted by the desire to reduce group disparities in, and to give individuals an appropriate share of, educational benefits, we have seen how the concern for equalising educational services has moved from attempts to equalise resource inputs to equalise basic outcomes. This move has led to the legitimation of differential financial allocations on the grounds of equity. As well, differential inputs on the grounds of maximising individual development has traditionally sanctioned differential expenditures. In this way, both compensatory (to help some groups "move up") and pursuit-of excellence (to help some individuals "get ahead" as far as they can) rationales are used to disburse resources unequally. There is less unanimity about the allocation of above-average resources in order to allow some groups to explore their "differentness" in cultural terms.

Certain forms of discrimination are regarded as legitimate while others are thought to be undesirable but nonetheless are accepted because of the lack of means to remove them. This very lack thus becomes a rationale (or rationalisation) for unequally distributed resources.

Points to be considered in relation to rationales for disbursing resources differentially would include:

- the value positions underlying various sorts of discrimination regarded as legitimate or at least tolerated;
- the extent to which the differential treatment of special groups is compatible with the basic goals of common schooling;
- the implications of various rationales (e.g. legal, psychological, medical, educational, social, political) for developing priorities among competing aims within the school system, and for justifying particular kinds of special provisions;
- the ramification for "general" education of making particular provisions for special groups;
- the significance of modes of financing (e.g. categorical programmes, tax credits, flexible budgets at the institutional level) for sharing resource allocations unequally;
- the implications of generating new resources to meet special needs versus re-distributing existing finances in favour of special groups (if resources remain constant, or even diminish, then redistribution may have to be effected either among groups or among agencies).

Theme C. Autonomy for Special Groups

The "differentness" of many special groups is now not only acknowledged and tolerated but also often catered for in public policy. But the desirability and practicability of their having autonomy over those policies is more problematic. That is, criteria of acceptable behaviour are increasingly recognised as being pluralist and fluid rather than unitary and static, and the right of individuals and groups to an equitable share of educational resources is assented to even if the practicalities of this are not agreed upon. What is less agreed is the right and propriety of special populations to exercise control over how these resources are used.

Thus, the provision of specific or supplementary educational resources for special groups is frequently regarded by them or their advocates, as an inadequate response to their perceived needs. This is because the provisions made with these resources — generally aimed at reducing disparities in life style between groups — are often determined by sources outside and beyond the reach of these special populations. For example, cultural pluralism may be proclaimed at the level of general national policy, but the school system may continue to orient minority group children towards mainstream values and behaviour patterns; and even where special organisational and curriculum arrangements operate, these may be confined to the special provisions themselves without impinging on the majority's attitude to the minority.

The matter of the varying degrees of autonomy which particular groups should, can, and do have over the kind of education they or their children receive (or at least that part which is provided through extra or earmarked resources) raises major policy issues for the orientation and emphases of the school system as a whole. In analysing the concept of autonomy, it must be borne in mind that the concept also has institutional (or organisational) and personal dimensions. A delineation of any one aspect of autonomy would have to take account of the interdependency of all these dimensions and in so doing deal with the complexity of the value choices inherent in considerations about autonomy.

Points to be considered in relation to educational autonomy for special groups would include:

- the relevance of educational autonomy for various groups, e.g. the handicapped, linguistic and cultural minorities;
- actions on behalf of a special population affecting, deliberately or otherwise, the whole school system;
- the competence of current schooling practice and/or organisation to actively address "differentness" as distinct from assuming "sameness";
- provisions for special groups being reflected in complementary provisions for the school population at large;
- population and administrative factors associated with the control of educational resources by special populations;
- sources of decisions about how resources for special populations are to be allocated (i.e. for educational and other purposes, and among various aspects of schooling).

Theme D. Service Delivery Arrangements

Assembling the most appropriate means to provide special educational measures for identifiable groups is obviously a fundamentally important task. Not only are the means, which call for inter-institutional and inter-sectoral co-operation, frequently beyond the scope and control of the school system, but changes in the provision, over time, require organisational adjustments and the acquisition of new skills and, often different attitudes on the part of those involved. Thus the issues of shared responsibility for a particular provision and of different responsibilities of staff, institutions and sectors,

as well as those of alternative financial and organisational means, require clarification in any consideration of arrangements relating to the "delivery" of a service.

Many provisions entail active support to the school system from other agencies and sectors. Yet there is some evidence that arrangements calling for close co-ordination and co-operation are less than optimal because of difficulties relating to different levels and styles of governance and to differences among professionals and agencies from different sectors. Also, many co-ordination schemes appear to be underpowered and under-financed — it being generally assumed that the same resources can be utilised more effectively in a different manner from the start, without interim supplementary assistance.

Besides considering the role of financing in the sharing of responsibility for special populations, there is a need for analysis of the means of effectively integrating specific purpose services into the overall education system in order to guarantee adequate support for particular groups within the framework of existing institutions. A central issue is how to ensure that the interests of special groups are given due consideration during the transfer process without creating a status for these groups entailing discriminatory consequences. The interest here is in processes rather than in an inventory of requirements for synthesising general and specific purpose measures to mutual advantage.

One requirement, however, which any study of financing, organisation and governance in respect of the educational needs of specially designated groups must inevitably look at, is that of an appropriately skilled and structured educational workforce. The demands placed upon teachers and supporting personnel to be increasingly responsive to individual, differentiated student needs implies a level of competence and inter-occupational co-operation which often exists more in theory than in practice. Particularly now, in a period of generally declining enrolments, when relatively few new staff are being employed, the redeployment of the educational workforce calls for an effective use of resources for in-service professional development.

Points to be considered in relation to current issues about service delivery arrangements would include:

- alternative ways and means of thinking about special assistance (e.g. focussing on type of population versus type of provision) for policy and administrative purposes;
- strengths and weaknesses of various management approaches (e.g. financial versus real resource controls);
- means of increasing the effectiveness of shared responsibility for a special provision, especially strategies enhancing working relationships among different levels of government and between different sectors and agencies;
- role to be played by the private sector in what is increasingly assumed to be the public domain;

- current practices in the preparation and certification of the educational workforce to cope with alternative forms of special provision, especially the use of financial and organisational incentives (e.g. salary incentives, release time, substitute staff) for in-service development activities.

Theme E. Costing

In studying the provision of schooling for special groups, the question of costs looms large. There are at least two issues of major policy relevance in this arena: the factors which cause costs to change over time and technical considerations in making cost analyses.

A provision for a special group is, in some cases, pioneered by the private sector and may be characterised by a voluntaristic, charitable, philanthropic outlook; as costs rise, in part through demands for professional (i.e. educational/developmental rather than charitable/custodial) treatment, in part through increased demands for the provision — which is seen as a right not a privilege or charity — there are calls for public support or even public control of the provision. As the public sector becomes involved, voluntary agencies may act as pressure groups or spurs to the public sector to meet the demands for the provision.

Since demand is seldom known or fixed (and tends to increase as the supply increases), the initial public sector thrust is commonly towards identifying the extent of need, according to certain criteria, in order to supply the provision; this is often accompanied by increased differentiation and the professionalisation of the emergent specialists — separate from the teaching service. By comparison, supply of the provision itself may receive less attention and finance since more resources are devoted to the identification of needs.

As far as resources for these provisions is concerned, whereas in practice, if not in principle, it is possible to set resource limits to mainstream education, it is not so easy in the case of special groups, especially when considered as a whole. Demand can be expanded almost indefinitely to accommodate the demands of children designated as being in need. It is pertinent, therefore, to ask what factors in the past have influenced the growth of these provisions. Aside from the significant role played by pressure groups in the political process, it is possible to discern two ways in which budgets change over time along lines that might be quite different if comprehensive cost information were available: incrementalism; and deliberate policy initiatives by those who govern education systems.

Where much of the outlay on special populations is located in mainstream budgets, gradual changes in levels of expenditure on them (whether proportionate to those for general provisions or not) should be capable of being monitored. Where the outlay on special provisions forms part of an educational (or social) programme initiative for a particular population, it is useful to be able to identify relative costs so that management decisions are better informed.

There are several reasons why detailed information about the financial elements of special provisions is scarce: the incidence of special provisions has been relatively small in many systems; their nature and form vary considerably; and they are frequently a combination of private and public sector activities.

The first requirement for an adequate data base is that separate accounts should be kept for all institutions or at least for all sectors. Systems of cost monitoring in respect of particular populations are often thought of as too demanding in resource terms, as they are seen to have to exist in parallel with the main channels of data reporting. Also, where the number of separate units of service delivered to any particular group is small, meaningful cost norms are difficult to establish. This is further complicated by some children being included in several groups at the same time, and by the definitions of groups and servicing agencies changing over time, thus making classification difficult.

Nevertheless, a useful broad distinction in cost analysis can be made between agency and client. The agency may be a school system or a locality, or an individual institution: the activities of such agencies are expressed financially in various unit costs. The financial resources directed towards the client are usually referenced in terms of a particular group or category of provision.

Points to be considered in relation to the costing of different responses to the educational needs of special groups would include:

- the extent to which perceived demand is a function of the supply of special resources available (i.e. funds, programmes and personnel for identifying needs as well as making provision) — the implications of this where resources are unevenly distributed among communities (e.g. between rural and urban areas);
- whether public subsidies for private provision mask real demand and encourage a cleavage between special and general educational provisions;
- the nexus between cost levels and funds availability;
- approaches to dealing with technical aspects of costing (the unit of analysis; specification of resource categories; shared and fixed costs; time, situational and scale factors);
- cost modelling.

Five Key Questions

In the school or school system with which you are most concerned:—

1. What kinds of special provision are made in the name of equity?
2. What principles and data are used for determining the need for particular provisions?
3. How extensive is the coverage?
4. By what processes and influences are resources allocated and used?
5. To what extent is there collaboration and co-ordination among various agencies in helping to meet the educational and other needs of special groups?

THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

M. L. HERRIMAN

Introduction

My concern in this paper is to analyse philosophically the concept of equity in the distribution of education. In attempting to do this it is necessary to look at the context out of which equity arises, that being the context of general discussions about equality in education. It can be accepted that discussions of the idea of equity in large part grew out of a dissatisfaction with the most favoured interpretation of equality; that is equality of opportunity. My main question will be, how adequate is the notion of equity to express the ideas and ideals contained in the traditional debate about distributing education. To answer this necessitates a wide discussion about the nature of education and its part in the general consideration of individual rights versus government or societal prerogatives.

Preliminary qualifications

I am going to speak of education in what I take to be its central sense, i.e. as synonymous with the processes of schooling including the tertiary level. I will confine discussions of equity and equality to the context of access-to and distribution-of education rather than its outcomes. I hope that step is agreeable to all but the extreme egalitarians.

It is necessary further to qualify educational distribution by deciding that education should be seen as a commodity in short supply. This restriction will not be accepted by some people, but we must acknowledge that in its present position as a public good, it has to compete for funding. I don't wish to deny that a certain society might see education as being so much of a natural right that no restrictions ought to be placed on its distribution. In a sense if education were a purely private matter the question might not arise either.

There was a time when discussion of this topic might have taken place outside of considerations of economic or political theory — that is no longer possible. The traditional discussion of equality as part of moral philosophy is lessened only by its making room for the claims of the newer fields such as public policy and intergovernmental relations. Hence current studies must take into account increasingly theoretically complex areas that impose their own conceptual restraints on what were philosophically pure topics.

Background

One can take a long term as well as a shorter view of discussions about equality. In the long term view the Anglo-American trend has been towards increasing equality of opportunity, such that present day problems of access to education can be seen as merely a matter of fine tuning, deciding to spend more money here rather than there in the context of a general universal system of schooling to late adolescence.

The progressivism of this view is offset by more recently perceived connexions between education and social welfare generally, which suggest

that educational attainment is linked to influencing background factors and future social and economic success. Hence issues of equality and equity in education have received a great deal of attention in the last decade both in the U.S. and Australia. Following the Coleman report (The Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey) of 1966,[1] the U.S. Dept. of Healt Education and Welfare undertook a massive programme of funding based on a significant re-ordering of priorities. After some years it was apparent that the anticipated results were not there. Not only was it difficult to see material effects of the programme, but their theoretical bases were harshly undercut by the publication in 1972 of *Inequality — A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America* by Christopher Jencks et. al.[2] In effect Jencks and his co-workers concluded that economic success was very little determined by educational attainment, cognitive skills, family background or income levels; the very factors which had been singled out for treatment in Coleman's programme. The Jencks study seemed to shake the optimism of the equal opportunity advocates.

In Australia, the Interim Report for the Australian Schools Commission (1973)[3] based a significant programme reorientation on what could best be seen as an interpretation of equal education as equality of opportunity. The unprecedented involvement of Federal Government funding took a different form in Australia and I am unaware of a direct attack of the Jencks kind on the Karmel assumptions. There has been generated instead a theoretical position which attacks the basis of Government intervention at the Federal level by denying justification for it under certain economic and political theories. It is that kind of attack which is the interest of my discussion, because the notion of equity lends weight to the supporters of that view.

Coincidentally with the programmatic trials of equal opportunity, there has been concern about the conceptual strength of the notion. The concept certainly doesn't suggest any immediate plans for its implementation. Many different policies could be claimed as supporting the claims of its advocates. To this extent the concept is like that of democracy — the most certain determination of it appearing hopelessly utopian, with the lesser interpretations vying for recognition as pure or most practical. The ambiguity of the concept turns on whether one is specifying opportunity as access, entry, treatment, elimination of handicaps or something else.

On moral grounds the principle of equality is difficult to support because its major premise is usually said to be the claim that men are created equals. If one further qualifies this to specify equal as equal-in-certain-respects then that qualification should also attach to the specification of treatment; which lays the ground for a principle of distributive justice i.e., treating unequals unequally. If one admits the need to apply such a principle, the issue of equity becomes important since the determination of relative equality is usually a statutory one.

The best argument in support of equality is of a different kind. It is in the recognition that equality is indeed an ideal and therefore not necessarily something operationalizable. Many people would claim that expressions of equality such as are found in the UN Charter function as reminders

that mankind finds some form of universal assent in these ideals, that they do serve to influence treatment of people, and that it is just this universal quality which indeed justifies them. Supporters of this position would rebut the critics of pure egalitarianism by saying that equality is not a finite goal but rather something to be strived for — in this case it is like freedom. One should not give up striving for freedom because it is unattainable in a pure form.

Equity

It is not surprising then, that in the literature of educational distribution equity appears largely to have replaced equality. The immediate practical advantages of the concept are quite clear. Given the conceptual link between equity and justice, the appropriate distribution of education is a matter of legalistic determination. Claimants on education can appeal to legislation governing its distribution and if no specific legislation exists, as is the case in Australian Constitution, can claim education as a matter of other rights specific or implied in a Constitution or in law.

The concept of justice has been the subject of some notable philosophical works of the past decade and though I would hesitate to make a direct claim it is perhaps not insignificant that the greatest of these works, John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*[4] has been seen by philosophers as focussing attention on fairness and justice to the denial of utilitarian principles of morality.

Some commentators on Rawls have seen him as suggesting that equity has replaced equality because of its link with fairness of distribution.[5] Rawls does however claim that his principles of distribution "express an egalitarian concept of justice". Rawls clearly sees equality as a useful concept since "equality" and "inequality" are frequently used to indicate desirable and non-desirable states in his writing.

Rawls states that a general conception of justice is something like the following:

> All social values — liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect — are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage.

Hence injustice is simply "inequalities that are not to the benefit of all". Rawls admits that these statements need qualifying and a large part of his work attempts just that. The significant point about this kind of definition is that it recognizes that one is working from a presumed state of stability, that a certain distributional arrangement can be altered only if it disadvantages no one. Rawls adopts the notion of 'efficiency' — which he claims is a more accurate interpretation of 'Paretian optimality'[6] as used by economists — to determine when a situation of distribution is to no one's disadvantage. This step is important to the discussion to follow. It remains to point out that in Rawl's notion of justice described above, the utilitarian view that the disadvantages of some are outweighed by the advantages of a greater number, is explicitly rejected.

The question of concern becomes: Is education a commodity of the sort that it can be distributed in such a way that no one is disadvantaged by the gains of others? This question does not arise accidentally — it is rather a natural result of any inquiry which binds educational distribution to principles of equity and justice.

If principles of equity can govern the distribution of education, then it would seem that given the generally perceived fairness in the law, education will be given to the worthy on their merit. I wish to argue, however, that there are some significant conceptual problems associated with the notion of equity that have consequences which I shall examine below.

The immediate complication in the concept of educational equity is that it can be linked conceptually to the field of normative economic theory. This in itself is no necessary evil, but in the circumstances where normative or prescriptive economics may be suspect, then careful attention should be given to the consequences of the view for education.

By normative economics I mean the claim that economic theory provides not just the means to ends that are value free, or are a matter of public policy susceptible to political resolution, but rather that economic theory can provide a key to selection of ends, that it can lead to value judgments. There are many economists who would support this 'means to ends' view and indeed it gains impetus from the general scepticism attaching to claims about value-free social science. I do not wish to debate the validity of normative economic theories. The important point is that discussion of educational distribution as a matter of equity does seem to devolve the question to the level of competing theories of public policy and economics. What is just or fair or equitable might seem to depend on the political perspective of the viewer. How this might come about will be discussed after I have attempted to link public policy and education.

The most obvious link between education and public policy comes through the public nature of education. Education is so closely tied with the general idea of the individual's growth, and is taken to be so-much-a-right in a vague sense, that few would deny a public interest, if only to guarantee the individual against violations from the state, parents or guardians, or other interest groups. It is clear that education serves a public as well as an individual interest since a large part of education has a vocational aim — whether or not it succeeds in vocational preparation is beside the point. The knowledge base of education is also public. Knowledge is available to all and its criteria of justification are public — a feature that has not always been part of education.

The strongest support for the public nature of education comes from the question of who should fund it. Most theorists would see public finance as the most obvious means of support, but it is not universally accepted. The largest consensus would accept that public funding should be provided even if the process need not be undertaken in a public institution. State aid to private education in Australia, North America and the U.K., is indicative of the acceptance of the public role of funding. Controversy develops around the question of where education should take place and not around the prin-

ciple of public funding. Finer distinctions are made between questions of funding and policy making; for example, should a funding agency determine policy generally or priorities in particular. Again the principle is not questioned.

Even if one were to deny the principle of public education, supporting the claim that it is essentially a private matter and not one for government interference, one still has to accept the problem of externalities. The processes of education produce more than just individual benefits; they advantage society in many ways. These spillovers or externalities because of their societal effects, naturally involve the public interest.

Education can be seen therefore as a part of public policy considerations. Taken with the view of equity as a determinant of distribution, it places the most central questions of education — outside of content — in the domain of the political and the economic.

I will now look at the extent to which the newer fields of public policy and intergovernmental studies have made a conceptual home for questions of educational distribution. In a recent publication[7] Hind looks at normative perspectives on the question of intergovernmental relations in Australian education. He identifies three competing views influencing the question of appropriate levels of intervention and division of powers in education. These views stem from more general views about the fiscal role of governments, but it is clear that the public nature of education allows it readily to be assimilated to the general view.

The traditions identified are the "public goods theory", the "public choice theory" and the "liberal welfare economics" theory. They by no means encompass all the possible theories of economic involvement, as Hind notes, but they do cover widely prevailing views about the extent of governmental intervention in public affairs. Furthermore they embody the principles upon which legalistic determinations are based, and if educational distribution is a matter for equity decisions, then these considerations will influence such decisions.

The "public goods theory" is seen as the dominant tradition and its clearest statement is identified by Hind in the work of Paul Samuelson. Applied to education it asks firstly "why government intervention is necessary in both or either of the production and resource allocation functions in education" and secondly what are "the most effective instruments of intervention to achieve relevant policy objectives".[7] In response to the first question Hind notes that intervention becomes necessary in order to maximise society's welfare. Society's welfare is determined by the welfare of consumers in society. Efficient allocation of resources occurs when all preferences of consumers are met. This is said to be a state of optimality, the idea again taken from Pareto. When it is not possible to redistribute resources without disadvantaging some consumers, market failure is said to occur. Market failure is the justification for public intervention.

The public goods theory accepts that certain characteristics of such goods make it technically impossible to provide finance for them through

the market mechanism. Hence they must be funded by taxation generated revenue.[8] Furthermore the generation of externalities by educational processes causes an imbalance in market conditions necessitating further intervention. The argument from further intervention is that the nature of externalities is such that a non-centralized government is more sensitive to local welfare gains or losses, since externalities will be more likely local than national. So far in this theory we have some quite explicit views about the nature and extent of intervention by levels of government as well as a view of social welfare and education in particular, which is in theory very closely tied to a market orientation. Hind extends his analysis to point out some general problems of justifying federal intervention in education in terms of public goods theory. Many of the questionable projects are those embodying the principle of equality of opportunity as determined by the Schools Commission.

In pointing out the weaknesses of the public goods theory, Hind acknowledges its incompleteness in that it is "a theory of political obligation only". It does not test its welfare assumptions against competing political structures. To this extent it is conservative, a characteristic it shares with Rawls' conception of natural liberty. The *status quo* can be upset only when it is to the disadvantage of no one. This Paretian derived ideal is useful since it obviates the need for the hard decisions about possible deprivation as a result of redistribution. To this extent public goods theory is value-free. Equity then becomes a matter of judging relative merit of claimants and awarding the prizes in such a way that no one is disadvantaged.

Rawls points to one of the difficulties in such a conception of optimality or efficiency. He notes that the efficiency criterion can be used to justify serfdom since any attempt to improve the lot of serfs must be inefficient since it would lower the expectations of landowners.

The public goods theory seems to be the natural home for equity at least inasmuch as it provides a sound basis for distribution. But if equity is to reside there it will mean that educational distribution or redistribution will occur in a very limited way and only rarely. As Hind recognizes, a fundamental assumption of the theory is that governmental intervention should be minimal. I feel this cuts much of the ground from equity if it were to be seen as an active concept or one generating positive activity. Culturally deprived groups or those with special difficulties in access to education will be funded only if their claims do not in any way disadvantage the potential or actual benefits of others.

"Public choice theory"[9] as described by Hind shares some of the assumptions of the mainstream public goods theory, notably the view of man as a "rational, egoistic, utility maximiser" that is, the classical man of social contract theories. It differs in taking a wider view of economics wherein it is linked to broader political questions about the effect of individual power strivings, group pressures, and bureaucratic behaviour on economic decisions. It lacks the elegance and simplicity of the mainstream theory, but its proponents claim that it more accurately depicts realities of economics

and public finance. It claims for goods such as education, that provision should be non-government though finance may be provided by governments. Federal type systems are seen as advantageous since they will "disperse authority between national and local levels of government" and attain a high level of provision of funding.

Given its general view that the individual or group of individuals is best able to determine his needs or priorities, public choice theory would seem to allow significant scope for equity claims. However Hind notes that a major weakness of the view is that it has not developed "a satisfactory theory of political motivation for redistributive policies".[7] If we are to take this as a deficiency in its ability to decide merit then little promise can be held for equity claims. Yet the demonstrated power cited for this theory is its ability to explain the power of coalitions to change government policy. Hind cites the power of the class coalition in New Deal politics in the U.S.A., and the technocratic coalition which he says became prominent during the Australian Labor government of 1972-1975, both of which not only undertook redistribution policies, but significantly increased the scope and influence of the central government. In these cases one is looking at a significant if not majority view of certain matters and such a tyranny as it might represent could be seen as antithetical to claims of a minority on whose behalf equity is often cited. It is quite uncertain to me that the notion of equity can gain from its implication in the framework of public choice theory, particularly given that theory's tendency to support non-government initiatives such as educational vouchers.

The other perspective which Hind sees as influential in determining economic and policy decisions in education is the liberal welfare one. Economic decisions are determined by the classic principle of governmental non-interference and the maximization of individual liberty. This view is quite familiar since it has been widely stated as the policy of the present Federal Government. Equity has a place in this view because redistribution of funding in education is not necessarily tied to criteria of efficiency or optimality. The problem for equity in the liberal view is that it conflicts with the notion that the individual is not necessarily the best judge of his own welfare, i.e. the classical liberal view of Mill. Equity claims can therefore be dismissed by denying the claimant's motives, or by invoking higher liberal principles such as non-interference in individual matters or non-infringement of freedom. Though a general principle of equality of incomes and wealth is quite consistent with liberal thought, the same thoughts support meritocratic assumptions which may not be sympathetic to equity matters. The present Liberal-Country Party government's policies are presently critical of the use of intergovernmental grants to schools to promote equality on the grounds that such grants promote the public sector. In essence the liberal view leans heavily towards non-public provision of and funding for education. It must be asked if equity can play a part in such a private world of education.

Many aspects of liberalism are common to utilitarianism, particularly those which depict the individual as not necessarily the best judge of his own welfare. Utilitarian principles are able to subsume the redistributive

ethic because of their avowed interest in maximizing the welfare of the greatest number. Some groups may have to surrender power or privilege in a redistribution but this is secondary to the main principle. The general liberal view espoused here is attractive in a significant way in the case of education because it fits well the view that the child is not the best judge of his present and future needs — a fairly major assumption in most educational theories. The role of education is to take the person from a state of ignorance to one of rationality where he will be able to make enlightened and appropriate choices. Liberalism justifies intervention on another's behalf in instances where it can be shown to be beneficial. Perhaps education is such an instance. The problem here is that the liberal ideal cuts across some major assumptions of the equity notion, particularly in its disadvantaging some to the benefit of others. This intrusion I believe is not a part of equity as normally conceived, but it can be merited or justified by appealing to principles of equality. Equality has not the legal trappings of equity; it allows wider scope for redistributive ideals under a liberal and utilitarian tradition. Notice also that a Marxist kind of view, that man's best interests may well be disguised by a false consciousness, allows decisions on others' behalf in what they might deny is their best interest. Again equity has no place, as equality is the principle usually invoked in support of Marxist redistribution — not overlooking the claims of workers to the fruits of their own labour.

The limitation of equity

If the notion of equity is that portrayed above, it is apparent that as a justification of redistribution it has application to a limited political and economic view. That view is essentially the one which says redistribution can be undertaken only if it does not disadvantage the benefits or expectations of others. Educational equity as a principle will work if there is unlimited funding for redistribution. Such a principle however is conceptually at odds with the economic theories in question. Not only do they assume a fixed supply in a market situation, but the very concept of redistribution implies a fixed set of resources and probably a fixed rate of funding. The principle of equity seems to be bound to a notion of the inviolable status of the present political arrangement. Redistribution might occur only when equity demands are attached to a demonstration of gross inefficiency in certain aspects of the market place. In that case economic intervention and redistribution might ultimately generate a greater efficiency in the malfunctioning part of market — for example, the inefficiency might be caused by a swollen centralized bureaucracy which is indifferent to regional demands; in other words, a situation often said to exist in Australian education.

If one moves outside of the confines of current theories about public finance and inter-governmental relations, the notion of equity loses its force. There is not much room for the concept in liberal or utilitarian views about educational distribution. It seems that the more wide-ranging principle of equality better justifies claims and interventions under those views. There are probably other political structures and arrangements overlooked in this discussion; for example the socialist democratic view. This view however shares with liberalism the ethic of intervention on behalf of a better arrangement and as such justifies its moves in terms of the principle of equality.

Conclusion

In looking at the concept of equity, I have tried to see where it might gain conceptual space. It has close associations with the idea of justice and fairness in law and its immediate appeal is as a more precise idea than its predecessor, equality. When one looks at political arrangements in which equity can be used to determine educational distribution or redistribution, the rather limited range of its application becomes clear. It is most applicable to theories of economic policy which assume a *status quo* as far as political structure is concerned. In this view, exemplified by public goods theory, major power arrangements are static and educational distribution is well tuned to the market concept of consumption. Equity aids in the further fine tuning of educational expenditure.

In liberal theory, I would claim that *equality* is a more useful concept since the liberal redistributive policies might have to cut across present distributions and justify such policies in terms of competing ideologies about balance of power between citizens and branches of government.

In socialist oriented democracies, equity perhaps has even less to offer since it does not accord with the necessary or at least implied view that social welfare and power arrangements are quite alterable to suit specific demands of new situations or changes in existing arrangements. For these needs a more generalized or idealized notion such as equality is better suited.

Equity it seems cannot replace equality. It is a concept with a different range, and is perhaps seen as a sub-categorical part of equality. Where it is useful is in determining claims before the law, but its weakness is that it is subservient to the law. The law is static in that it assumes major political decisions have been made; it doesn't really question them. Equality by contrast is a more universal principle against which laws themselves might be formulated. We must recognize the problems of the concept of equality, its various senses, its indeterminate status, its idealized nature; but recognize as well that its role is different from that of equity. After an equity determination has been made we might still ask to what extent it accords with the principle of equality. I must therefore conclude that equity cannot replace equality.

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9. As identified for example in Dennis C. Mueller, "Public Coice: A Survey", *Journal of Economic Literature*, V. 14, No. 2, June 1976, p. 398.

THE DISADVANTAGED COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAM: A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO INCREASE SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL EQUITY FOR RURAL CHILDREN*

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The purpose of this paper is to describe the Schools Commission's disadvantaged country areas program as an important strategy in promoting social and educational equity for rural children in Australia. After a brief consideration of the historical background to the establishment of the disadvantaged country areas program, the objectives and operation of the program will be discussed. Strategies for improving education for rural children will be described. Finally some of the constraints and tensions governing progress in the program will be discussed in relation to possible directions for the future.

The Schools Commission

Establishment and functions

The Schools Commission was established in 1973 along the lines recommended by the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission which was set up by the Commonwealth Government to examine the needs of government and non-government primary and secondary schools throughout Australia.[1] The functions outlined in the *Schools Commission Act 1973* include consideration of the need to improve the quality of existing school provision and the promotion of equal educational opportunities. In implementing these goals, the Commission is required to take into account, among other things, the needs of disadvantaged schools and of those students in all schools who are disadvantaged in their pursuit of educational success for reasons connected with their social, economic, ethnic, geographic, cultural or lingual background.

Program structure

The Commission established seven programs to administer the funds which were recommended to the Government as expenditure necessary for Australian schools to reach acceptable standards. The programs reflect the priorities the Commission considers should be given to the needs of schools and their students for buildings, equipment and staff. One of the five specific purpose programs is the Disadvantaged Schools Program, which is directed at improving the quality of education for disadvantaged children. The Program has two elements: disadvantaged schools and disadvantaged country areas.[2] The disadvantaged schools element is described in a paper presented to the 1978 Annual Conference of the Australia College of Education.[3] Over three hundred rural schools (22 per cent) participate in this section of the Program. The disadvantaged country areas element is the focus of this second paper on the Program. Disadvantaged children and groups with

*The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author alone.

special needs in rural areas are also catered for through other Commission programs: for example, handicapped children and children in residential institutions through the Special Education Program, ethnic children through the Migrant and Multicultural Education Program, and groups such as girls, Aborigines and early school leavers through the Special Projects Program. In addition, the Commission's general purpose programs, the General Recurrent Grants Program and the Capital Grants Program, provide funding for general educational expenditure for all children, including the rural disadvantaged.

Values

The values espoused by the Commission in all of its Reports have particular relevance to the disadvantaged country areas program.[4] In emphasising equality of educational opportunity and outcomes, the Commission maintains that ideally life chances, which are strongly associated with the special competencies which schooling is designed to build, should be independent of geographic, social and cultural background. All young people should leave school able to make sense of their world and act confidently in it. The Commission believes that the quality of schools and their educational programs will be improved by increasing parental and community participation, and developing decision-making and responsibility towards the school level. Schools should be open to a range of possibilities and functions beyond existing arrangements. If school programs are to be effective, they must adapt to the social, cultural and ethnic differences of children within the school and to the geographic location of the community served by the school.

The Disadvantaged Country Areas Program

Historical background

Australia has a long history of expensive provision of education to country areas. State education departments have an impressive record of achievements in country education as they have attempted to reduce as far as possible any educational disadvantage derived from living away from urban areas. Nevertheless, regardless of the positive things being done, generous financial expenditure and the favourable attitude towards solving rural problems, serious misgivings exist about standards in rural education. In 1976, reports of the Commonwealth Government's Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts and the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty in Australia indicated that rural children participated less in schooling and in post-school training than those in urban areas and had low levels of aspirations, expectations and achievement.[5] A recent study of teaching, learning and transition to work in isolated schools showed that country students were seriously disadvantaged in reading achievement, self esteem, the teaching and curriculum they were experiencing and in their transition from school to work.[6]

The Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission recognised the educational disadvantages faced by country children. In *Schools*

in Australia the Committee drew attention to the serious challenges faced in isolated rural areas where social and cultural pursuits rarely reinforce school experiences and in regions where itinerant and unskilled workers gather seasonally. The Committee suggested that the provision of educational facilities for isolated students be a matter for early consideration by the Schools Commission.[7]

In a major chapter of its 1975 Report the Commission reviewed the funding requirements for country education.[8] It recommended allocations within the General Recurrent Grants Program for activities designed to improve country education, and within the Capital Grants Program to upgrade residential facilities for students and improve teacher housing in country areas. Owing to the unstable economic climate these recommendations were not accepted by the Government of the day, however, they became the basis for the funds which were specifically allocated for country education in 1977. In its 1976 Report the Commission recommended the inclusion of a disadvantaged country areas element within the Disadvantaged Schools Program in recognition of the different complex of variables associated with educational disadvantage in country schools.[9] A total of $4.1 million was allocated to allow pilot action in a limited number of the most affected areas.

A major ground for the provision of extra resources to country children is the tradition of low retention rates in country schools. Although 1980 statistics are not available, census statistics and statistics from selected regions in Tasmania, detailed in Tables 1 and 2, illustrate contrasts in retention rates in urban and rural areas. In a society where levels of education are rising and formal education increasingly determines life chances, the consequences for children failing to reach certain minimal levels of competence become even more serious than they have been in the past. Other problems, such as limited cultural and social influences, a paucity of resources, parochial perspectives, limited peer, parental and teacher expectations, poverty, lack of employment opportunities and the general economic stagnation associated with depressed rural conditions, all make the task of schooling more difficult in country areas. It is a matter of social justice that rural children should receive the maximum assistance from educational programs and that country schools should be given support to adapt their structure, curricula and educational practice to extending the opportunities and widening the horizons of the children they serve.

TABLE 1[10]

STUDENTS ATTENDING LEVEL 10 EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL STUDENTS IN THE SAME TYPE OF SCHOOLS AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION, AUSTRALIA, 1971

Geographical Location	Government			Catholic non-government			Other non-government			All schools		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Major urban	4.7	3.9	4.3	5.9	4.9	5.4	17.9	16.0	17.0	5.6	4.7	5.2
Other urban	3.8	3.5	3.6	4.0	3.4	3.7	16.3	15.3	15.8	4.1	3.7	3.9
Rural	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.8	3.2	3.0	10.4	11.1	10.7	3.0	3.2	3.1
All locations	4.2	3.6	3.9	5.1	4.4	4.8	17.2	15.6	16.4	4.9	4.3	4.6

Source: From tabulations provided to the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 1971. (*Fitzgerald, R.*, Poverty and Education in Australia: *Fifth main report of the Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty. Canberra, AGPS, 1976, p. 21*).

TABLE 2[11]

YEAR 10 RETENTION RATES, 1973 TO 1976, AND YEAR 11 RETENTION RATES, 1974 TO 1977, IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS BY SELECTED SCHOOL REGIONS, TASMANIA [a]

School region	Percentage of Year 7 entrants remaining to Year 10 in				Percentage of Year 7 entrants remaining to Year 11 in			
	1973	1974	1975	1976	1974	1975	1976	1977
Urban regions								
Eastern Shore (Hobart)	81	81	86	87	35	35	35	34
West Tamar (Launceston)	87	84	95	95	35	40	32	28
Rural regions								
Huon Valley	69	62	68	77	11	12	11	14
Derwent Valley	66	77	76	78	18	11	14	12
Tasmania	74	74	77	79	28	29	30	28

[a] These retention rates do not take account of the effects of student transfers between urban and rural regions or government and non-government schools, grade repetition or migration.

Source: Education Department of Tasmania

Objectives

The disadvantaged country areas program aims to promote more equal educational opportunity through positive discrimination in resource allocation to schools serving Australia's most underprivileged rural areas. The additional resources are given to investigate new patterns of services designed to improve the quality of educational provision for all students in declared disadvantaged country areas, including correspondence students and those in government and non-government, primary and secondary schools at reasonable cost. Rural communities are encouraged to work with teachers to develop initiatives which involve sharing resources and facilities, and programs which will broaden and suit the experiences, interests and aptitudes of country students. By engaging parents and community people as partners with teachers in the learning process it is believed that schooling will become more effective and community life will be enriched.

Selection of areas

The Commission recognised that in view of the great variety of geographic situations in Australia the selection of the areas in each State should be left to those most aware of the various geographic, social and economic factors operating in the communities most affected by rural disadvantage. It was suggested that areas selected should be those where schools were so placed as to be capable of communicating and interacting with one another for the purpose of devising and implementing shared projects. Factors listed by the Commission as important indicators of disadvantage were school characteristics, such as retention rates, teacher turnover and limits on curriculum choice, and the nature of the area and its community, such as general socio-economic factors, ethnic composition, social isolation, employment opportunities and itineracy.

In 1977 fifteen areas were declared disadvantaged by the Commonwealth Minister for Education on the advice of the States following consultation between government and non-government authorities. By 1980 the number of areas had grown to twenty-three, with over 530 schools and 70,000 students participating in the program (Figure 1). 86 per cent of the students are in government schools, and 69 per cent are in primary schools. In Western Australia and South Australia the Correspondence Schools and Schools of the Air are declared as disadvantaged country areas, so all isolated students in these States participate in special projects. In the other States correspondence students living in the declared areas are included in the area projects. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of enrolments by State and system in 1979.

Funding

Since 1977 $18.6 million have been allocated for the program, distributed among the States on the basis of the numbers of students receiving isolated students allowances and the numbers of students living in centres of population of less than 5,000. Table 3 details the financial allocation to each State in 1980. The program has been maintained at real financial levels since it began in 1977 with an increase of $400,000 in 1979. The cost of this

recurrent provision amounts to approximately $70 per student in declared disadvantaged country areas representing 0.13 per cent of total Australian educational expenditure on schools. The allocation to the program represents 0.76 per cent of the overall Comomnwealth Government expenditure on schools. In terms of national average per student expenditure, the program provides approximately 5.27 per cent additional resources per student in schools in disadvantaged country areas.

TABLE 3

DISADVANTAGED COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAM: FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR 1980

State	Amount $
New South Wales	1,472,000
Victoria	835,500
Queensland	1,212,000
South Australia	397,000
Western Australia	843,000
Tasmania	287,000
Northern Territory	112,000
TOTAL	$5,158,500

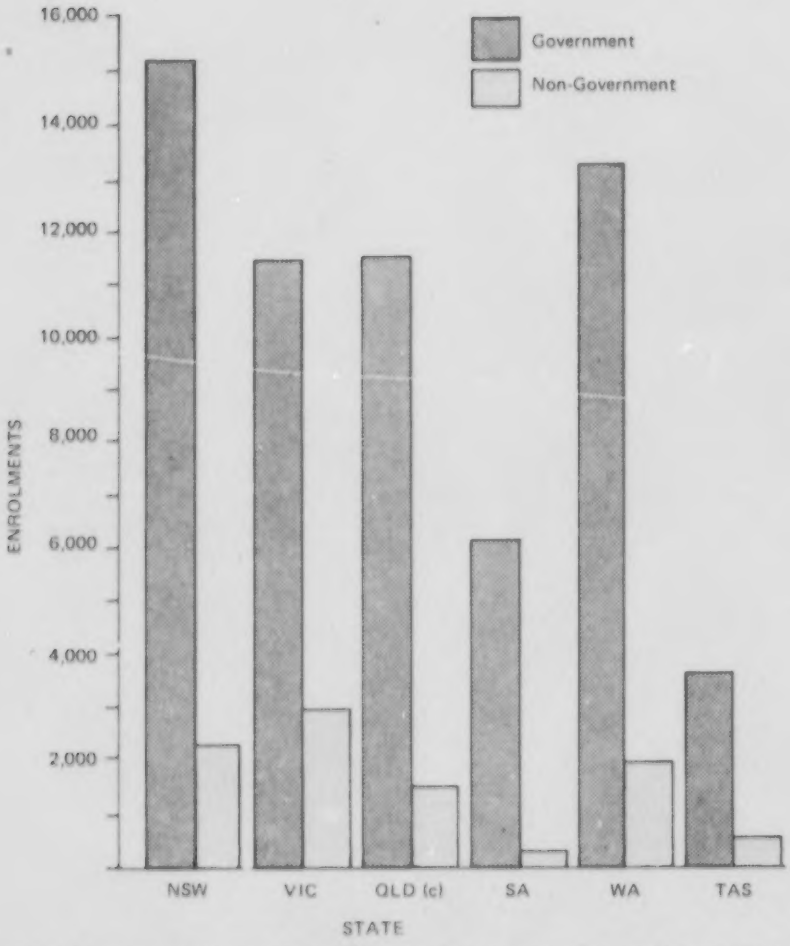
FIGURE 1

DISADVANTAGED COUNTRY AREAS AUSTRALIA 1980

Not shown are the areas involving the isolated children of the South and Western Australian Correspondence Schools and the Port Augusta School of the Air (S.A.).

FIGURE 2

ENROLMENTS (a) IN SCHOOLS IN DISADVANTAGED COUNTRY AREAS, BY STATE (b) AND SYSTEM, 1979



(a) There are no maximum enrolments set by the Commonwealth. Each State decides the number and size of areas to be declared.

(b) The Northern Territory has been included in the program in 1980 but to date no area has been declared.

(c) In 1980 an additional area has been declared in Queensland.

Committee structure and functions

Decision-making in the program is shared by systems authorities, State and area committees, and local working parties (Figure 3). At national level, coordinators of the program in each State meet annually with a commissioner and the program director to exchange information and discuss policy issues.

State level committees range in size from three to nineteen persons representative of government and Catholic education systems, non-systemic schools, academics, teacher and parent associations and ethnic communities. Their functions include liaison with the State Minister for Education, government and non-government education authorities, the Schools Commission and other interested agencies; promoting an understanding of the program through enunciating program principles and aims, and establishing general guidelines for operation; receiving submissions from area committees; reviewing current provisions for country education and assessing needs; and making recommendations on additional areas to be declared.

At area level representative committees are closely involved in the development of submissions, the implementation of funded projects, and monitoring and evaluating the progress of the program in the area. They assist in the identification of needs and resources, foster community involvement and provide a link between those working in schools and communities and the State committees.

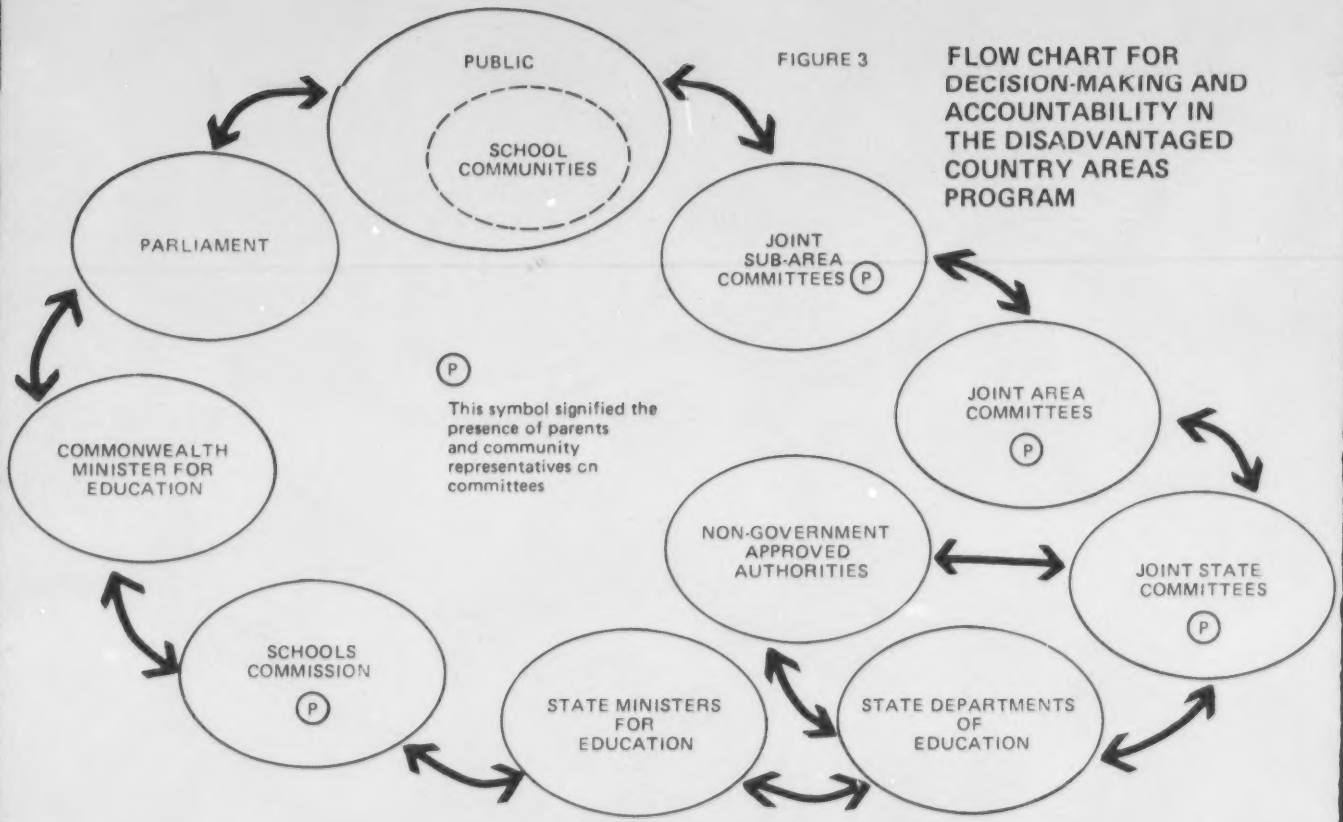
Local action committees and working parties, consisting of teachers, parents, other community members and students, develop cluster projects for groups of schools in the areas. For some of these committees it is a requirement that 50 per cent of the membership should be lay people. The detailed structure and function of each State's committees is provided in the Commission's published reports on the program: *Learning to Share*.[12]

Processes of operation

The processes established to use the additional resources provided are a very important part of the disadvantaged country areas program. The program rests on the premise that there are no known universal recipes for improved educational approaches, motivation or outcomes as they are associated with social inequality. Area communities are required to analyse the existing school ararngements and the special needs and life experiences of their students, together with the particular resources and benefits available within the area. They develop proposals which they consider will improve educational practice in the schools and improve learning outcomes for the students. These proposals are put to the area committees which allocate funds to provide the resources in either human or material ways. Generally, decisions about projects are made locally rather than at central level. Part of the process which is expected of area communities is that they constantly evaluate the projects they have put into practice.

FIGURE 3

FLOW CHART FOR DECISION-MAKING AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE DISADVANTAGED COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAM



The joint nature of the program has engendered cooperation across primary and secondary divisions and sectarian boundaries and has led to the sharing of ideas, responsibility, personnel and resources. Cooperation has extended across State boundaries where areas meet, as in the case of Queensland and New South Wales. The concept of sharing across areas has built cooperative networks of people and organisations in country areas. The development of people through the cooperative decision-making processes of the program has built confidence and competence in rural communities.

Scope of Activities

Among the declared areas different factors operate to reduce the effectiveness of schooling and approaches have been varied according to the special needs and particular kinds of disadvantage in the different areas. But there are also many common problems such as isolation (both geographic and cultural), relatively low community standards of education, limited vocational opportunities and lack of resources, which have led to the initiation of similar approaches to project development.

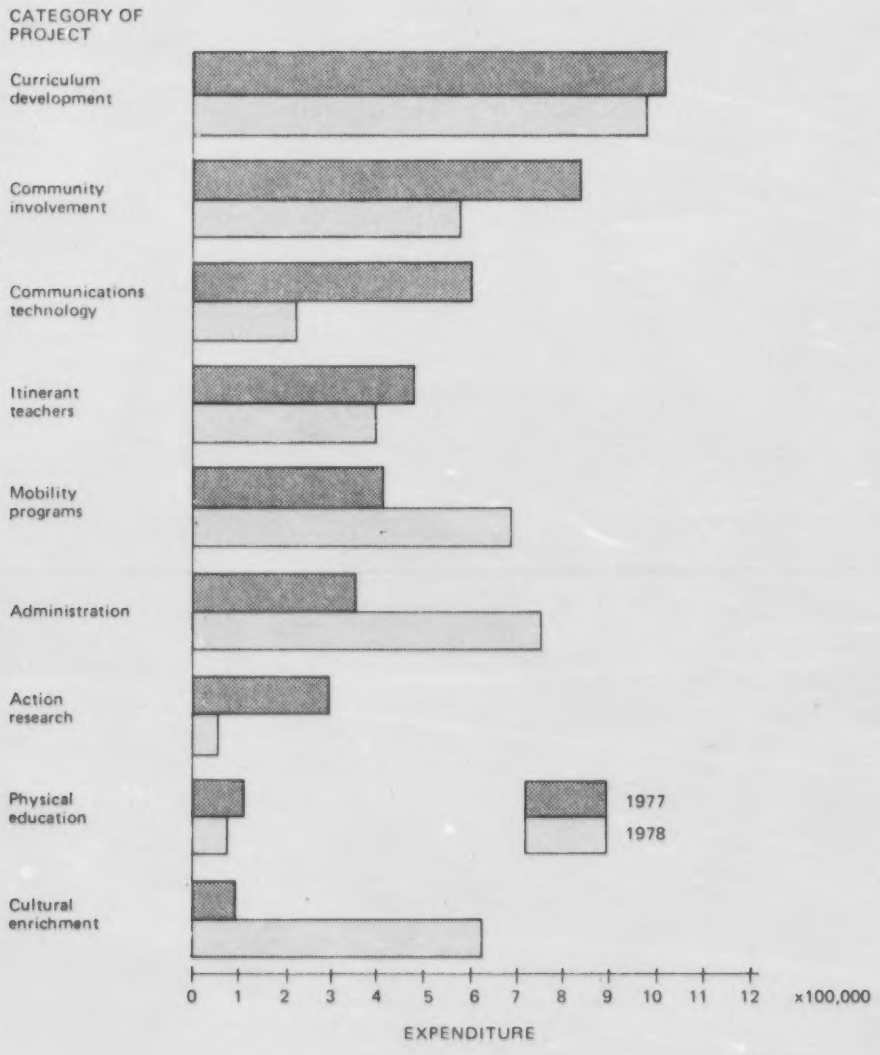
Figure 4 illustrates the categories of projects implemented through the program in 1977 and 1978. The division into categories is somewhat arbitrary as many of them overlap. For example, most projects have an element of community involvement and it has been difficult to separate community involvement projects from the cultural enrichment and social development category. Over the two years for which statistics are available there has been a considerable increase in administrative costs and transport, attributable to the declaration of more areas which have required additional services. The initial capital and equipment expenditure on community and communication facilities in 1977 tapered off in 1978.

The following description of projects is intended to give the flavour of some of the key strategies adopted to improve educational services for country children.

Transport and mobility

The problem of geographic isolation has stimulated projects involving student travel, the employment of itinerant teachers and specialists, and the use of mobile resources to bring a variety of equipment, materials and services, such as mobile libraries, curriculum buses, resource units, art craft vans and remedial caravans, into isolated areas. In Queensland mobile manual arts workshops, one for woodwork and one for metalwork, have met the demand for technical education in isolated areas and a mobile classroom provides a bridge between the primary correspondence school and the regular classroom. The mobile classroom visits a number of localities for at least one period each term, and where necessary, students board privately in the neighbourhood so they can attend each day. A pilot, who is also a musician, cooperates with local instructors in providing music education for over four hundred students in six centres. Town and regional bands have been formed to enliven the cultural experiences of these country communities.

DISADVANTAGED COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAM: CATEGORIES OF PROJECTS FUNDED, AUSTRALIA, 1977 AND 1978



Curriculum development

Some projects have been responses to urgent and specific needs of some individuals and small groups in the areas. The problems of isolated correspondence students and those periodically cut off from their schools by bad weather have been recognised by providing home-study kits in a variety of curriculum areas. Curriculum consultants have been appointed to work with local staff in producing relevant materials, such as environmental readers and local history resource books. Aboriginal culture kits produced in New South Wales include materials for both teachers and students at primary and secondary levels with information about the traditions, culture and lifestyles of Aboriginal people. In Victoria drama developmental programs use drama workshops to develop language and social skills; human relations courses involve lectures, workshops and seminars around issues affecting family life; and literacy and numeracy remediation courses are organised by parents and teachers during the school holidays.

Community enrichment

Some projects reflect the desire of rural communities to create a more positive climate for learning and overcome the limitations imposed either by isolation or rural depression. The general level of competence and confidence in the community itself is seen to influence directly the effectiveness of schooling. In the Western Wimmera Area in Victoria up to 1,000 people, including 700 school-leavers and adults, participate in a technical life skills program. Subjects ranging from welding and car maintenance to woodwork and crafts are taught in schools, garages, farm sheds and community halls. Both professional and non-professional instructors are involved. Community festivals are held in most areas to bring children and adults together, display art and craft, teach and learn new skills, enjoy sport and recreation, and celebrate community activities. In South Australia an itinerant teacher 'rides the rails' at Australian National Railways expense to deliver an expressive arts program to children in three isolated schools. During the day children participate in crafts, drama, art and music activities and at night adults share in the program. Photography and jazz ballet have been two of the activities brought to these communities for the first time.

Technology

A number of projects reflect an awareness of the impact which modern technology and communications could have on education in country areas. In some cases this awareness finds a modest expression, such as the installation of an additional telephone at a correspondence school enabling students to make reverse charge calls to their teachers, or the expanded use of audio-visual materials in the curriculum. In Queensland video receivers have been supplied to schools which are beyond normal transmission so that regular Australian Broadcasting Commission educational programs can be received. In addition, programs are being produced with local content of immediate interest and relevance to country children at a range of age levels. ROCTAPUS (Really Outstanding Colour Television About Practically Unlimited Subjects) is a fortnightly magazine television program provided to more than eighty schools and over 10,000 students in the ten to sixteen

years age group in the areas. In New South Wales an Education Radio Station (2WEB) has been established. Its Telephone Broadcast Unit enables talk-back radio programs to involve school groups in exchanges with visiting and local experts. The radio station provides a practical training facility for students in many aspects of modern communication and media techniques. In Victoria audiovisual equipment has been installed on a school bus so that children travelling up to three hours each day can be shown a range of educational and recreational programs.

School-work transition

Although schools cannot make jobs they can attempt to improve the access of country students to the available jobs and help them to think about the nature of work in our society. A residential centre for country students has been established in Sydney enabling Year 10 country students to visit the city for three to four weeks to enjoy a variety of work and leisure experiences. As well as participating in work experience with employers, the students tour museums and galleries, learn job interview techniques, receive careers advice and undertake voluntary work for community services. A pilot project conducted at a local milk factory in Victoria offers work experience in boilermaking, factory maintenance, engineering mechanics and office procedure. The success of this scheme has led to meetings of career teachers in the high schools in the area in order to coordinate existing work experience opportunities and develop new ones.

Upgrading facilities

In some areas existing facilities had run down because of population drift and economic depression, and in some cases facilities which are taken for granted by most Australians had never existed. In both New South Wales and Western Australia, community youth centres and education resource centres have been established which have had far reaching effects beyond the school in providing services to community groups and individuals. The centres have contributed to social development, cultural enrichment and recreational opportunities for all members of the community. In the King Valley/Ovens Valley in Victoria a survey found that more than 65 per cent of children in the small schools in the area were unable to swim well enough to be considered safe in water or to be able to enjoy the recreational advantages of their own beautiful area, with its many rivers. Three learner pools have now been built and a swimming program is underway. School libraries in isolated areas have been expanded and curriculum development materials have been provided.

Effective use of resources

Projects undertaken in all areas over the past three years reflect an awareness that more effective use can be made of educational resources which have often been neglected in traditional approaches to schooling. Local people with artistic, musical and technical talents have become the backbone of many programs as the hidden talents in the community have been discovered. The unexplored natural environment is the basis for the Barwon River system project in New South Wales, and for camping and field study programs in other areas. In many communities new and interesting ways of

sharing resources which would have otherwise been too costly for any one group have been trialled. For example, in Tasmania a specialist project team of consultants is supplying a diagnostic service and assisting teachers to produce remedial programs in language and mathematics. The team, which includes a speech therapist, social worker and music teacher, spends a period of concentrated activity in a school before going on to another school in the area. The sharing of ideas and approaches has stimulated community involvement and led to the professional development of isolated teachers.

Constraints and Tension

While the brief descriptions above have indicated the scope of the disadvantaged country areas program for increasing social and educational equality for rural children, a number of problems place constraints on the effectiveness of the program.

School based versus shared area programs

Some areas cover such vast geographic distances that area based programs are not feasible. For example, in the Far North Area of South Australia where six schools cater for people in the remote Pitjantjatjara Aboriginal communities, the closest schools are more than ninety kilometres away from each other and the group of schools spans some eight hundred kilometres. The Commonwealth guidelines provide for school based programs to be funded in such cases, but the economy gained from sharing resources is not possible and the range of action open to an individual school under the program is limited. Many services are impractical and are expensive on a single school basis. On the other hand, where the school is the unit of the program it is more likely that its internal processes, relationships and curriculum content will be seriously scrutinised. The area emphasis can draw the attention of teachers away from an examination of how successful the school is in formal teaching. It can encourage a proliferation of 'add on' projects which other people can implement. Another drawback of the area approach is the number of people involved in area committees which can become so large as to allow public participants to dominate in a way which does not promote the development of schools as communities of action. There is a danger that the committees may become a focus of sectional conflict whose first concern is not the education of students in schools. Nevertheless, where professionals and community people are brought together to consider what students should get out of school to enhance the quality of their lives, the understanding that schools alone cannot be held responsible for educative experiences and formal outcomes is spread. In my view a balance between sharing programs across areas and paying attention to the basics of individual school programs must be achieved for maximum benefits.

School based versus community based programs

Under legislation all Commission funding is for primary and secondary students. The primary intention of all activities must be to benefit students, and schools must own the equipment bought. In some States, there has been so much stress on the community involvement sought through the program

that teachers claim some programs funded have been solely for the benefit of adults. In one State, in particular, the program has deliberately aimed to provide education for local development. Certainly in all States the experience of community participation and local control of educational programs has decreased the powerlessness of rural communities and contributed to an understanding of the processes involved in change. Many of the activities commenced in the schools have now been taken over by the communities, which have tapped into governmental agencies other than education for additional financial, material and personnel support to improve the quality of community life. Nevertheless, in my view, educators must be concerned primarily with improving the day-to-day experiences of schooling for children. Turning outwards towards the community must be evaluated largely in terms of what it does for school change and student development. Parent engagement in the educational programs provided for their children, has positive spin-offs in attitudes to learning. A balance is needed between the school's responsibility for and contribution to the individual fulfilment of students, community needs and development, and the needs of society as a whole.

A 'rural' curriculum versus a core curriculum

The program has highlighted the inadequacy of the curriculum in some rural schools in Australia. Factors such as the high turnover of staff, teacher inexperience, limited resources, poor physical and social environment, and isolation have been blamed for unsatisfactory curriculum adaptation and implementation. There is general agreement that rural schooling should pursue system-wide objectives to the extent necessary to provide rural children with a coherent, systematic K to Year 12 program with continuity of curriculum in the fact of student and teacher mobility and opportunities to progress to vocational opportunities or further education. Nevertheless, the curriculum must reflect local circumstances and values, utilise local resources and be relevant to children's day-to-day activities. Local curriculum projects in all areas have assisted students to come to value their local community and helped the community both to understand and contribute to the schools programs and to see the school as a major community resource. In one area a pool of expertise in curriculum development is being developed. In some States committees have communicated to tertiary education institutions the importance of provision in pre-service courses for teachers to be trained to be aware of the local community and understand adult communication skills. Inservice activities with these aims have been organised within the areas.

System support versus independent operation

In most States attempts have been made to build the program into system structures. Personnel have been provided through systems personnel branches, and supplies and equipment have been bought within the usual departmental tender constraints. In some cases the intersystemic nature of the program has given strength to program committees to stand outside direct bureaucratic control and publicly to challenge bureaucratic constraints which would limit the ability of people to do what they decide should be done.

In one State the chairperson is himself outside bureaucratic structures and has independent access to the Minister and the media which facilitates this. In another, staff have been employed through the Catholic Education Office allowing the program to support people who could not have been employed under normal government staff ceilings. At this stage it is too early to say whether building the program into the system makes it more kindly disposed to picking up the costs of successful programs. No State seems anxious to do this. Nevertheless, should funding cease, it is possible that programs which have become part of the system will continue to operate, whereas programs outside the system may lose all financial support. On the other hand, programs outside the system may be more successful in seeking support from sources other than education departments.

Pilot projects versus on-going programs

At the commencement of the program it was recognised that the funds available were only sufficient for the testing of prototype patterns of providing educational services in the most disadvantaged of Australia's country areas. After three years, area committees feel that some of these pilot projects have established themselves as worthwhile, even essential, services. If those projects are not taken over by systems, with the present policy of maintenance of funding, no extra resources exist to try out new ways of meeting the needs of country students. In addressing this issue one State has decided to phase areas out of the program every five years and rotate its country areas through the program. The policy decision involves a year's planning grant, three years full funding and a year's grant to wind up programs. Although this development might be satisfactory for a specialist resource team, it would be disastrous if the major project were a radio station, or television programs or itinerary teachers which depend on ongoing funding. Another State has suggested extending funding to all country areas. In considering this alternative a great deal depends on the relative weight given to resources and processes in estimating the effectiveness of the program, and on the importance placed on the areas involved being special as a source of the *elan* which sustains the program. If the program is seen as a general prototype for improving country education the further it is spread the better. If positive discrimination and the greater urgency of improvements in the most disadvantaged country areas are given prominence the desire will be to confine it. If there is to be no increase in Commonwealth funds and States are unable to fund ongoing projects it is difficult to see how any additional areas might be declared without phasing out areas presently included.

Local projects versus research and development

Most States have distributed as high a proportion of funds as possible to the areas, leaving little money for research and development projects, but, some have been carried out. New South Wales has commissioned tertiary institutions to conduct research into three areas: the educational needs of country children, motivation and achievement in country schools, and school leavers and their occupations. In Victoria a survey of educational needs of migrant students has been completed and an Initiatives Committee

has recently been established at State level to encourage the development of new ideas. Queensland has piloted a significant scheme whereby teacher education students volunteer to spend their holidays on isolated homesteads supervising correspondence lessons and stimulating the language development of students. In Western Australia a study into teaching methods in one teacher schools has been funded. Tasmania has preceded the opening of each area by a well documented study of the educational needs of the area. In a few areas full consultation with teachers and community people originally produced projects which were unimaginative and reflected a desire for more of the same. In these cases the input of people with a broad understanding of the economic and social context and some expert knowledge, such as how to help teachers to cope with special needs in the classroom, improved the quality of programs implemented. In other cases, a particular emphasis expressed by program administrators for one kind of project, say curriculum development or mobility, constrained the possibility of a variety of programs in particular areas. In my view a balance is needed between research and action, between the input of professionals and local people. Certainly more needs to become known about opportunities for young people in the country areas of Australia if projects concerned with the problems of country children and country schools are to be soundly based.

Consultants and coordinators versus local development

One State decided early to employ full-time program administrators and consultants, and part-time coordinators in the areas. Emphasis was given to sponsoring intra- and inter-area visits by committee members and holding seminars and inservice activities for key people in the program to the extent that almost one-third of funds has been spent on administrative activities. This approach clearly limits the amount of funds available for area projects. By way of contrast, one State committee, which has relied completely on the part-time consultancy service of busy administrators, held its first State seminar in 1980 and has lamented the lost opportunity to communicate more effectively the philosophy and guidelines of the program and to provide much needed support to people in the areas. Again a balance is needed but the key role of effective communication in successful program development indicates the importance of constant inservice work.

The Future

Despite rural to urban migration trends it is clear that thousands of Australian children will continue to be dependent upon rural schools and rural delivery systems for their education during the compulsory years of schooling. This paper has not discussed the problems of access to secondary level opportunities in country areas, the needs of special rural populations, such as Aborigines, itinerant workers and girls, nor the difficulty of attracting and retaining competent experienced teachers, which continue to be of concern. The reality of high per pupil expenditure in rural schools offering an adequate program has not changed. The cost of providing exactly the same programs, services and resources in rural schools as are commonly found in urban schools is prohibitively high. It is therefore essential that government policies and assistance are designed explicitly to maximise

social and educational equity for rural children. The disadvantaged country areas program as described in this paper is one reform strategy with this specific purpose.

The program has given the stimulus for educators to examine some of the most fundamental ways in which we think about country education. In the past we have sought to reduce as far as possible educational disadvantages derived from living away from urban areas. This notion is based on the assumption that the urban model is best. Some area committees involved in the program have taken as their starting point the need to amplify the educational advantages of living in country areas. Instead of schools being seen as belonging to centralised systems, they have been considered as schools which belong to their communities — communities which have some responsibility for the quality of education going on in their schools. Local people have been trusted to make intelligent choices and to define their educational needs, working together with professionals and have produced promising results.

The program has been in operation for only three years so it is too early to demonstrate conclusively its long term effects. In some States the processes of the program have been slower to develop than in others. However, in all States the program has become an exemplar of good resource allocation generally, demonstrating the potential impact of the area approach and the possibilities for sharing supplemented by marginal additional resources. The initiatives made possible in the 5.3 per cent of Australian schools participating in the program, which include those in the most isolated areas, have generated hope in those working in the schools and living in the communities surrounding them. Whole communities have been regenerated as people have identified local resources and acted together to improve education for their children. Strong support for the program exists from systems, national and State parents and teachers associations, school communities and community organisations. It may be that through co-operation, sharing of resources, sharing of the decision-making process, and emphasis on the advantages and competencies that communities possess, results could be produced that last beyond an initial funding period.

Of course the future of education in disadvantaged country areas cannot be considered in isolation from the realities of rural life in general. A recent edition of Four Corners, which discussed the closure of the abattoirs at Forbes in New South Wales, has reminded us again of how vulnerable and fragile communities dependent on one industry really are if that industry collapses. Further, the movement towards social and educational equity for children in declared areas has not yet had an impact on children in depressed rural communities outside declared areas. Nevertheless, the spirit of co-operation amongst and across schools, school systems and communities engendered by the disadvantaged country areas program can be a model for other areas and might stimulate systems to use their own funds to spread some of the program processes to other country areas.

The program has certainly made schooling a more effective experience for country children in declared areas, if effectiveness is measured in terms

of the objectives of improving the quality of educational provision, broadening children's experiences, providing new ways of sharing resources and facilities, and stimulating community involvement in schooling. In terms of improving learning outcomes there is promising evidence from Tasmania. The proportion of Huon Valley children at risk because of performance in basic skills has been substantially reduced since 1976. While the improved performance on standardised tests of reading and number cannot be directly attributed to the initiatives taken through the program there has been an improvement in comparison with the rest of the State that is significant.

The most successful projects across Australia are those in which rural people themselves have taken initiatives, indicating that much of the responsibility for moving ahead belongs to those working in rural education and those who live in rural communities. However they cannot do it alone. Knowledgeable professionals working together with rural educators and local people are needed over the longer term. The success of the program will be measured by how well it has supported these working partnerships and how effectively this leads to the access of all country children to full participation in society.

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EDUCATION AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

D. BRADLEY

Introduction

Any discussion of the effects of the Women's Movement on education in Australia must take account of the fact that feminism as a theory is more than the right to equal pay or to abortion. If it is to be taken seriously it places in question all the underlying assumptions of our society. Whatever their perspective, feminists are concerned about equal rights but the really radical thrust goes far beyond this and it may well be that resistance to change in education is influenced in part by an understanding that the feminist argument questions all our social relationships.

This paper adopts the position that it has been exceedingly difficult even to have the equal rights issues debated seriously in Australian education and some of the reasons for this are discussed from a feminist perspective.

This paper is critical of the educational community and attempts to consider why there has been little action on women's issues. It has been written from the basis of my own experience as a feminist in education because I am a teacher who has been actively involved in the Women's Movement in South Australia since the early 1970's and I became Women's Adviser to the South Australian Education Department in 1977.

Of course, one may argue that it is a clever move to suborn your critics by making them part of the system. I believe, however, that the South Australian Education Department, once it had decided that there was a problem to resolve, advertised the position and deliberately appointed someone who had been a constant and vociferous critic of its structures and practices because there was already a real acceptance of the need for change. The Women's Adviser's position may be token but it was not a token appointment because since 1977, the administration of the Education Department has been supportive of the Women's Adviser's position in two ways — by treating women's issues seriously in discussion about policy and by allocation of resources which make non-sexist curriculum development possible.

Therefore, this paper must not be seen as a statement about the South Australian Education Department. I believe that Department has shown a concern about women's issues that can be demonstrated by the resources it has allocated to the area in various ways over the last three years — more resources than any Education Department in Australia.

These are my views about the barriers to an acceptance by politicians and administrators in Australia of the educational and occupational disadvantages of women. It marks the beginning of an attempt to evaluate what has happened in the last ten years and tries to indicate not how feminists should change but how the educational community should consider the issues raised.

1970-1975

For the last ten years or so educational policy makers have, from time to time, been aware that some people believe that education in Australia is sexist. Sexism was coined as a direct analogy of racism — the differential valuation of human beings on the basis of secondary biological characteristics. Sexism is supported ideologically by unstated assumptions about the essential inferiority of women — reflected in the distribution of work, of rewards and of social power and in literature and in the social sciences. Simone de Beauvoir has made one of the most succinct summaries of this view:

> "Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth." (2:175)

Sexism is supported institutionally by the perpetuation of the ideology in social institutions like the education system. Radical feminists have argued, however, that as the oppression of women is at the very heart of all our social arrangements — the nuclear family, marriage, romance, etc. there can be no real change in social institutions until the personal and social relationships of men and women are transformed. This particular analysis of the problem led feminists in the early 70's to the concept of consciousness raising — the point where theory and action meet. Consciousness-raising occurred when women came together in small groups to discuss their own experiences of sexism.

Through small group discussions they saw that what they had often perceived as unique, personal problems were experiences shared with other women. From this interaction with other women they were able to begin to make generalizations about the role of women in society and to commit themselves to the notion of social change. This change was not, however, to be brought about by using male patterns of behaviour — competition and hierarchical structures were eschewed. Cooperation, collective responsibility and collective action were stressed:

> ". . . the Women's Movement proposes a reassessment of our concepts of what it means to be human (which, in most societies, is heavily determined by gender) and, when it is talking of more than equality in the on-going system, suggests the end of the masculine ideology of dominance, competitiveness and individuality in favour of something more like the traditional 'feminine' characteristics." (1:124-5)

By the early 1970's in Australia the 'new' feminism was gaining some attention. It was not a popular movement. Politically Leftist groups often found the early Australian feminists very difficult — they seemed to be saying there would be no revolution until the politics of housework were satisfactorily straightened out! Indeed, they asked prominent chaps on the Left — good guys from way back — how long it was since they had done the washing up? Even worse, they began to exclude men from women's meetings and argued that as women were the oppressed group they could gain nothing from cooperation with their oppressors. They said there was

nothing they could learn from men and that men were incapable of working cooperatively with women as they always wanted to incorporate competition and hierarchical structures into discussion and meetings. Men could not belong to conscious-raising groups with women as they impeded the process.

Like many women who were around in those days I still remember the indignation and indeed the anger of men on the Left when their advice was ignored, when they were told to be quiet or to get out. The price of their wisdom about strategy was, inevitably, their dominance in the group. Their experience was not ours, we had to learn by ourselves.

For politicians and bureaucrats there was a different problem. Clearly there was discontent among women. They sought advice about what to do. But where were the leaders? Who spoke for the women? When you tried to communicate in writing with the Chairperson of the Women's Liberation Movement and ask her to a meeting either you got a letter explaining there was no such person or 20 women turned up for a chat in your office. No-one seemed to be in charge. Decision-making was impeded because there were no representatives of the Women's Movement who were prepared to take decisions for other women, without consulting them. It seemed an interminable process!

There was a further complication. Many of the new feminists in Australia were young and with relatively little experience of politics or of the bureaucratic corridors of power. The situation in South Australia from 1970 to 1975 seems to have been common throughout Australia. Active feminists were either young or inexperienced or both. Nevertheless, it was clear that some method of working among women, by women and for women would have to be achieved without dependence upon male advice and without recourse to male patterns of group behaviour. At the same time active feminists had accepted that the personal was political — that the way you lived your own life was a political statement. This meant that all were involved in often agonizing reassessments of their relationships with other people and in renegotiation of old domestic arrangements.

Women supported each other as hard decisions, personal and political, were arrived at and carried out. It became clear during this time that:

- group support was essential if women were to change their domestic arrangements and personal relationships.
- women were hindered in political action if they were still oppressed within their domestic relationships.
- while supporting each other women could refine their analysis of the problems of women in society and begin the process of deciding in what areas they could contribute to desirable social change.

What we learnt was that the theory could be converted to action, that the ideas about desirable ways of operating worked and enabled us all to learn from each other. We hadn't re-invented the wheel. We'd found a new way of moving.

1975 onwards

1975 was International Women's Year. The Federal Government had appointed a Women's Adviser, Elizabeth Reid and, throughout Australia, feminists felt that it was time for governments and their bureaucracies to recognize the justice of their criticisms. Women in the Women's Movement, whether they were radicals or reformists were demanding more action about women's issues. There was agreement about some immediate goals. Governments had already recognized that feminist demands were radical and controversial. Politicians were unsure how much political capital could be gained by their support of demands for abortion law reform, sex discrimination legislation and the establishment of women's health centres, women's shelters, rape crisis centres, women's resource centres, etc.

1975 was an interesting year in education, too. Until 1975, feminists in education (a female dominated area of employment) had had little impact. There were very few senior women in education in Australia and even fewer of them would have seen themselves as feminists. Research funds had not been channelled into areas that feminists saw as vital. Indeed, until 1975, very little other than content analysis of educational materials had been done. The feminist critique of education was relatively unsophisticated because most feminists in education were isolated from sources of research funds, working in male-dominated environments which were usually hostile to their views and were able to gain access to vital information like male/female ratios in promotion positions in educational systems.

It was a good year. In South Australia, International Women's Year Committee funds established a Women's Studies Resource Centre at the Wattle Park Teachers Centre. The Curriculum Development Centre and the International Women's Year Committee funded two national conferences on sexism in materials and produced non-sexist guidelines for educational materials. The Schools Commission as one of its contributions to International Women's Year set up a study group which produced a thorough, comprehensive and reasoned report, *Girls, School and Society*. For the first time in Australia the evidence was available for all to see. Women and girls were disadvantaged. The education system failed half the population by hindering its opportunities to reach full potential. On any grounds — social, humanitarian, economic, it was an enormous waste of human ability and talent. *Girls, School and Society* refined and supported the feminist critique of education and directed educational policy makers both to areas that needed more thorough investigation and to areas which needed immediate action.

The response to the publication of *Girls, School and Society* was interesting and differed from state to state. Some education systems chose to ignore the evidence it presented and did nothing. Others performed the classic bureaucratic sideways shuffle — they set up Committees to investigate the report of the Schools Commission and to report on what was happening in *their* state. Others, sometimes with the aid of funds from the Schools Commission, began a tentative exploration of what could be done. On the whole, though, the formal response to *Girls, School and Society* was not very encouraging and now, five years later, in Australia little research has been done and less action has been taken. Why is this?

Reasons for the Inertia

Of course, even a feminist analysis must accept that people with the power to change our social institutions are likely to be reluctant to do so because of their own vested interest in the status quo.

> ". . . those interested in perpetuating present conditions are always in tears about the marvellous past that is about to disappear, without having so much as a smile for the young future." (2:738)

One could argue, then, that predominantly male bureaucrats fear the loss of individual and group advantages. Obviously, there must be some truth in this suggestion. But, there are few non Anglo-Australian people or working-class people in educational systems and, yet ethnic groups and low socio-economic groups have been recognized as educationally disadvantaged throughout Australia and have gained various extra funds to attempt to lessen this disadvantage. Why has it been difficult to gain action in education on women's issues when the concept of special treatment for disadvantaged groups has been generally accepted?

The following explanations for the inertia in education over women's issues have been advanced:

- the feminist argument that the oppression of women is so much part of our social arrangements that either we do not recognize it or we accept is as 'natural' (and immutable).
- the dim recognition by bureaucrats that if you begin to accept the notion that women and girls are disadvantaged then you are inevitably faced with the necessity of radical structural changes in education systems — dismantling promotion systems, revising standard tests, engaging in large scale teacher development programs to raise awareness and change teaching methods.
- a clash of style between male-dominated, competitive, hierarchical education systems and unstructured feminist collectives which encourage women to accept other women's lifestyles and work with them.
- a belief that feminists can always be proved wrong if one woman can be found to disagree with them and the birth of an organized right wing reaction form groups which stress the 'natural' functions of women as wives and mothers.
- the widespread belief that equality of opportunity cannot allow any positive action in favour of disadvantaged groups. It can only mean removal of discriminatory barriers.

Let's examine each of these explanations in turn.

Female Oppression is Unrecognised

Only a feminist analysis of our society accepts that the relationships between the sexes are 'political', that is they are power-structured relationships whereby men control women by means of external constraints like unequal working conditions and by women internalizing a very limited concept of their social role, based on their capacity to bear children. The argument is often advanced that women are equal but different. The difference is usually explained in biological terms — they produce babies and

are, therefore, different. Such an argument infers that men are somehow 'normal'. Simone de Beauvoir has most aptly summarised it in *The Second Sex*:

> ". . . humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being." (2:16)

There is some striking evidence of the truth of this statement. Brovernman (5) asked three separate groups of clinical psychologists to assign from 122 behavioural and personality traits the characteristics they would attribute to the:

- healthy male
- healthy female
- healthy adult

The attributes assigned to the 'healty adult' were those assigned to the 'healthy adult male' — independence, confidence, aggression, ambition, logic, sense of adventure. Those assigned to the healthy adult female included talkative, passive, quiet, emotional and needing security. Those assigned to the healthy adult were identical with those for the healthy adult male and were in conflict with those of the healthy adult female.

It is difficult for women and men to accept the possibility of members of each sex being independent, confident and ambitious when there are so few women who are able to exhibit these characteristics within a social framework which encourages their dependence, uncertainty and passivity. It is a pity that the few women who manage to break out of the stereotype are seen as exceptional and, therefore, 'different'. Often these women are ones who have not fulfilled social expectations about women — they have not had children. As a result, the adequacy of individual women's emotional and social adjustment comes into question rather than the justice of the social framework in which women function.

Equal Opportunity for Women in Education poses great structural Problems

This can be best illustrated by considering the implications for education systems of feminist demands for greater participation by women in educational decision-making to ensure better and fairer decisions. Let us use the South Australian Education Department as an example because an accurate statistical survey of male/female participation in the teaching service is available (4).

Over the last 15 years the obvious structural barriers to the employment and promotion of women have been removed. As well, the South Australian Sex Discrimination Act, 1975, which forbids discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status in education, in employment and in the provisions of goods and services has been passed.

58% of South Australian teachers are women and they have equal pay, can obtain maternity leave and are no longer temporary teachers without access to the career structure through promotion. Nevertheless, as the accompanying table shows: (4:38) women are not, as yet, storming the

promotion heights. There has been little change, relative to men, over the last 10 years. The situation in primary teaching is most striking. 68% of primary teachers (i.e. teachers Year 3 to Year 7) are female yet only 2% of them hold promotion positions. Male teachers — 32% of primary teachers, are very well represented in promotion positions as 34% of them are either deputy principals or principals.

Percentages in Promotion Positions

Year	*Percent of all men in promotion positions*	*Percent of all women in promotion positions*
1968	31.0	6.0
1969	31.0	7.0
1970	31.0	7.0
1971	34.0	6.0
1972	36.0	7.0
1973	36.0	6.0
1974	36.0	7.0
1975	37.0	7.0
1976	36.0	7.0
*1977	36.0	8.0

*Latest available figures

Within the central and regional administration of the Education Department women occupy only 14% of administrative positions and most of these are at the lower levels. The Education Department's Policy Committee and Management Conference — the two most significant central decision-making bodies have only one woman member and of the ten Regional Directors only one is a woman.

Some reasons for this situation are:

- even those married women teachers who are now only in their thirties are likely to have encountered structural barriers to promotion during their career and older married women teachers have definitely been hampered in their access to promotion.

  This latter point must affect the proportion of men and women in the most senior administrative positions in schools and in the management structure of the Education Department.
- many women teachers have not yet accepted that a place in the career structure is possible for them because they lack role models within the system.
- many male teachers and administrators may still be displaying covertly discriminatory attitudes to women. These attitudes were quite acceptable in the Education Department only ten years ago. Such attitudes can take a long time to change but can be instrumental in blocking individual women teachers from promotion through discouragement by their superiors.

Now let us suppose that it was wholeheartedly accepted that this situation was socially and educationally undesirable. What do you do when

enrolments in schools are dropping, recruitment of teachers is almost at a standstill, the loss rate of teachers is very low and promotion for anyone, male or female, is most unlikely? Either you change the whole system which is a decision fraught with all kinds of political and industrial problems or you hope the complaints will go away. It is hardly surprising that people in educational systems do not want to examine the feminist critique too carefully!

Organizing on Different Assumptions

Despite an increased interest in worker participation or in industrial democracy there can be little argument that educational institutions and systems in Australia are hierarchical, despite the devolution of authority during the 1970's.

Indeed, Departments of Education are still so hierarchical that, throughout Australia, individual Ministers and Directors-General of Education can manage to have their idiosyncratic educational ideas stamped on the system if they are strong enough and remain there for long enough. Hierarchical systems are competitive and teaching is an intensely competitive profession — we all start on the bottom rung with the same qualifications and a very few climb to the top, after a protracted sorting process at each rung.

The Women's Movement, however, believes in and tries to practice collective responsibility and collective action. Radicals and reformers alike try not to put other women down and to recognize the contribution that we all can make from our own experience to the development of theory and to plans for action. Competition is seen as undesirable because it detracts from the sharing of experience: If knowledge and experience are shared then power, too, can be shared.

The dialogue between feminists and the education systems has, when it has existed, been a most unsatisfactory one. In part, the fault lies with the men who run education. Few of them appear to have any base of social or educational theory from which they operate. They distrust mightily individuals or groups with an 'axe to grind'. Feminists are often seen as dogmatic and inflexible because they have a theoretical position which informs both the decisions they reach and the processes they engage in to reach decisions.

As well, feminists are usually outside systems and critical of what is being done. They are often not in the position to be aware of pressures from other sources — political, financial and industrial. They argue about principles, while the administrators are constrained by numerous other pressures which make it simple in many cases to explain that they, as individuals, agree with the principles but cannot affect practice. Without doubt, the administrators do have constraints upon them but regulations, established practices, parental opposition, lack of funds, 'political' implications are commonly used as excuses for not undertaking research, let alone action on women's issues. It is very hard for women who lack information about bureaucratic procedures to argue against such excuses and they are forced to argue once again from principles rather than from a basis of information — information that the system is being used against them.

There seems little hope that this will change until more women are able to enter the bureaucracies and gain information both about how such bureaucracies should work and how they really work.

Perhaps, however, the most powerful weapon used by people in education against feminists is the aggressive and destructive undermining of individual women by labelling and ridiculing them. As a feminist I can't help but notice how often the social and educational views of feminists are explained away, apparently because the woman expounding them does not conform to stereotypes about sex appropriate behaviour. Often no attempt is made to discuss what has been said. What is sought is an explanation of what personal experiences the woman has had that can explain why she holds these views. It is not surprising that many feminists resent the use of the 'ad feminam' argument and react against people who use it. It is a very effective weapon for belittling the opponent's argument. And, there is still the problem of style. Decision-making in education depends on hierarchical structures with different levels of responsibility, division of responsibility and the right of veto always held at the top. Such a structure can reach rapid decisions which, once arrived at, must be loyally supported throughout the organisation.

Within the Women's Movement there is a constant tension between radicals and reformists and a general acceptance of collective decision-making. Both of these things lead to considerable and often lengthy debate about possible courses of action. The debate may continue too long and decisions may be made before the Women's Movement can contribute its views. It is easy to become impatient and indeed contemptuous of the processes of decision-making within the Women's Movement because they do not mesh with established bureaucratic processes. And yet, it is a dangerous stance to take. The early development of women's shelters in Australia shows us how wrong bureaucracies can be in judgements about the actions on issues raised by the Women's Movement. Radical feminists asserted that there was a clear need for women's shelters. The bureaucrats and politicians were wary that this was another attack on the family. They were reluctant to listen. They became alarmed when radical feminists argued that such shelters should be barred to men, managed by women and autonomous. The bureaucrats cited administrative difficulties, political dangers and lack of funds as reasons for not establishing women's shelters. The Women's Movement went ahead and established them. The bureaucrats then found that there was a desperate need which they had not recognised. More importantly, they found that the organisation of women's shelters with its emphasis on group decision-making and group support enabled many women and children to escape from the vicious circle of low self esteem and domestic violence. Perhaps educational bureaucrats may find that the Women's Movement's theoretical perspective and its emphasis on shared responsibility may have something to offer to education?

Women as a Political Party

Women are half the population and, like men, have a wide range of social and political beliefs. Feminists are a group of women who believe

that all women share common experiences of oppression within a male dominated society. They accept, however, that non-feminists do not consciously share this view and that some women are actively hostile to it. One of the reasons why the Women's Movement has been so valuable to attack from right wing women's groups over the last two years has been because of a reluctance to organise against other women, even when those women are expressing reactionary views. Another reason for vulnerability has been a stance often taken by male politicians and bureaucrats about the divergence of opinion among women about women's issues.

A common view seems to be that action will be taken when all women agree about what needs to be done. Of course, there will never be such agreement. Even in the Women's Movement there is continuous and healthy debate about theory and practice between reformists, Radical feminists and Socialist feminists. Women are not and never will be a political party with an agreed platform.

How does a politician or an administrator decide what to do? Lack of agreement among women should not be used as an excuse for lack of action in education. The decision to act should be taken as a result of an examination of arguments presented by all groups and an analysis of the relationship between these arguments and the generally agreed and stated aims of the educational system. Any program which seeks to confine women and girls within boundaries prescribed by sex role stereotypes is in opposition to the stated aims of education in all school systems in Australia. If we believe that education should enable all groups to achieve equality of outcome then the feminist critique of education must receive more than token attention. If politicians and administrators are seriously concerned about the equality of education for everyone and are themselves operating from some consistent, conscious theoretical position then they must engage in serious debate with feminists who question current theory and practice. How many education systems in Australia have debated the following statement and how much action has resulted from the debate?

> "Sexism is a process through which females and males not only progressively learn that different things are required and expected of them because of their sex, but learn those things in an unexamined way. Good education is incompatible with such a process; central to it is the examination of assumptions and the rational consideration of alternatives. Hence 'sexist education' is a contradiction in terms; good education is necessarily non-sexist, it makes no assumption about sex differences." (6:17)

A critical examination of current practices in education cannot fail to show that education is sexist — operating on unexamined assumptions about sex differences. Lack of action cannot be excused because there is lack of agreement among women about what is necessary. Fear of controversy should not stop the development of better education for all. If you accept that women are socially and educationally disadvantaged and take action to remedy this within your school, your college or your department, there is no doubt that you may meet vigorous opposition. Feminists and reactionaries alike would agree that any such action threatens many of our unques-

tioned assumptions about society. But if, as is happening throughout Australia, little or no action is taken then, feminists would agree, a political statement is being made by those with power in education — the social inferiority of women continues to be reinforced by the education system.

Two Wrongs don't make a Right

Positive discrimination in favour of women and girls is not a popular notion. Many supporters of equal rights for women are opposed to any action beyond the removal of discriminatory barriers. One can imagine the debate before this statement was made:

> ". . . at least in the short run, there are good grounds for taking special steps to improve the view girls have of themselves as people able to make significant choices and as people able to occupy any position. There are also good grounds for acting directly and urgently on the social realities themselves by taking extraordinary steps to promote women to positions of responsibility, for assisting them in special ways to gain the qualifications and confidence to fill those positions and for exposing and ending remaining discrimination against them." (6:9)

Of course, the statement is correct. If we are to have any changes in the status of women and girls in education we shall have to make very positive efforts. People will have to be employed — to run special programs to increase the confidence of women and girls; to influence non-sexist curriculum development; to monitor Personnel policies and practices. Resources will have to be diverted from other areas to support any program of action. Structural changes as well as attitude changes must occur. Other groups will not gain advantages they have come to regard as normal. However, if this is not done there will be very little change. Undoubtedly, those with advantages to lose see it as positive discrimination and will argue against it.

Policy makers will have to decide whether to call this 'remedial action' which has been quite acceptable for other disadvantaged groups or to call it 'positive discrimination' which is the term used when such action is applied to women's issues.

Conclusion

After ten years the feminist critique of education has had little impact on educational practice in Australia. There have been some changes but it could be argued that such changes are no more than could have been expected at a time of more general social changes in women's role. There is little evidence that there has been much planned, systematic change in education systems. This paper has sought to do no more than to move the arguments surrounding women's issues in education from the consideration of the supposed failings of the Women's Movement to a consideration of some of the reasons why educational policy makers and administrators have failed to take the issues seriously. If we are concerned about the quality of education for all then there must be more careful, sensitive and rational consideration of the feminist critique of education by those with the power to bring about change in the 80's than there has been in the 70's.

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ISSUES OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

D. R. Steele Craik

Introduction

The Australian system of government has been traditionally identified and described as an example of the Westminster system under which a government is chosen from elected representatives and that government is responsible and accountable to them.

Additionally we have the principle of ministerial responsibility which is enshrined in section 64 of the Constitution —

> "The Governor-General may appoint officers to administer such departments of State of the Commonwealth as the Governor-General in Council may establish.
>
> Such officers shall hold office during the pleasure of the Governor-General. They shall be members of the Federal Executive Council, and shall be the Queen's Ministers of State for the Commonwealth."

A minister is therefore answerable to the Parliament for the administration of a department of state, denoting the individual responsibility of the minister to account to Parliament. As policy directions and ministerial decisions are made by the Cabinet, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, all ministers, in addition, have a collective responsibility to Parliament (and the public) for the conduct of government. It should perhaps be noted that nowhere in the Constitution is there any mention of Cabinet.

The Public Service is the principal instrument of the executive government. Various departments have been created according to functional responsibilities to administer the Government's programs and provide advice to the ministers. Under the Westminster convention, public servants are not held publicly answerable for the policies they carry out in their official duties. Nevertheless because of political reality, it has been asserted that "ministers do not accept nor does Parliament or the public expect them to accept a blanket responsibility for the acts of their officials — or for anything other than the most serious and personal errors . . . . . it is obvious that a minister does not and cannot have a detailed knowledge of all that goes on within his department . . ."[1]

The situation was aptly summed up by Walter Bagehot in "The English Constitution" where he said —

> Sir George Lewis, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, "used to say, 'It is not the business of a Cabinet Minister to work his department. His business is to see that it is properly worked. If he does much, he is probably doing harm. The permanent staff of the office can do what he chooses to do much better, or if they cannot, they ought to be removed. He is only a bird of passage, and cannot compete with those who are in office all their lives round.' "[2]

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The permanent head of a department has a statutory responsibility under section 25(2) of the Public Service Act for the "general working" of the department and for advising the minister on all related matters. Additionally under the Audit Act, the permanent head is responsible for making appropriate arrangements for implementing the provisions and associated directions of that Act in his department.

The Public Service Act also directed the setting up of a Public Service Board with, among other things, the responsibility for "devis(ing) means for effecting economies and promoting efficiency in the management and working of departments . . . ," and to "advise the permanent head of the department of its suggestions or proposals . . ." (section 17).

Responsibility and Accountability

The Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration commented on the closely related concepts of responsibility and accountability —

> "We use them in this Report to describe two aspects of the relationship between a person entrusted with a task towards that task and towards the authority which entrusts him with it. Thus, a person is responsible *for* performing the task and *to* the authority which entrusts him with it. If there is a procedure by which he can be called upon to report on and justify his performance, and can be rewarded or penalised according to judgment on it, then he is also accountable."[3]

The Canadian Royal Commission on Financial Management and Accountability in its Progress Report of November 1977 had this to say on responsibility and accountability —

> "In its simplest terms, to be accountable means to be liable to be called to account for an accepted responsibility, but this definition is not practical unless it is extended to include a judgment upon the performance of that responsibility. Thus meaningful accountability requires that there be
>
> - procedures for setting objectives and goals and for assigning responsibility to achieve results;
> - a reporting system or systems that provide information on the progress made towards the achievement of goals;
> - a review of the reported results with the purpose of evaluating performance.
>
> . . . . the way in which Parliament holds the Executive to account for the conduct of its administration of government and the way in which the Executive in its turn holds the senior managers of the public service and Crown agencies to account for their administration . . . are two separate but interrelated systems of accountability and control that provide the foundation for responsible government."[4]

The Canadian Royal Commission on Financial Management and Accountability (the Lambert Report) in its final report[8] appears to have had some difficulty in expounding a coherent doctrine of accountability. At the conceptual level, it contented itself with some poetic phrases:

— Accountability, like electricity, is difficult to define.

— We see accountability as the activating but fragile element permeating a complex network.

— Accountability moves through this network like a current in a circuit.

At the more practical level, the Commission was required, according to Professor E. Hodgetts (a member of the Commission) in a keynote address to a recent National Government Accounting Convention, to trace the accountability linkages within the bureaucracy — from the bureaucracy to the Ministry and on and through to, and including Parliament where relevant. The Commission saw Parliament as the key to the accountability question — as discipline for any system of accountability must work from the top down — and Parliament is the ultimate source as the holder of the ultimate sanctions. If the Parliament fails to accept the challenges, any system of accountability is in jeopardy.

Parliamentary Machinery in aid of Accountability

At the Parliamentary levels, the fundamental power is control of appropriations — evidence by the annual Budget Speech, followed by the passage of appropriation acts. Under section 83 of the Constitution, "no money shall be drawn from the Treasury of the Commonwealth except under appropriation made by law". One of my roles as Auditor-General is to ensure that this requirement is not breached.

There is also a variety of means by which Parliament conducts continuing scrutiny, especially of the Executive, to ensure that the will of Parliament is carried out and it is kept fully informed. These include questions with and without notice, motions and debates. Additionally, there is an array of Parliamentary committees, all of whom call for an accounting of actions of the Executive and the public service in giving effect to policy decisions. These include the

- Joint Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts
- House of Representative Expenditure Committee
- Senate Committee on Finance and Government Operations
- Senate Estimates Committees
- House of Representatives Estimates Committees.

In addition there is a number of Joint and either Senate or House of Representative Committees with charters for examination of particular areas of activity.

Additionally, of course, there is the continuing scrutiny of Parliament and public services by the press and other media.

Internal Management in aid of Accountability

At the departmental level there is a widespread network in the pursuit of accountability at the service of the Executive, namely the Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Finance, the Office of the Public Service Board and the permanent heads of departments who, in turn, have internal auditors and management advisory specialists at their disposal. In addition there is a further network which may be seen as primarily at the service of the public, namely the Ombudsman, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Administrative Review Council. Further developments may occur if the Freedom of Information legislation is passed into law.

These scrutiny/review bodies therefore play an important part in evaluating the performance of those who have been entrusted with a responsibility for undertaking a task.

The Role of the Auditor-General

As Comomnwealth Auditor-General I hold a statutory office of special independence, not subject to direction by the Executive Government or by any other authority and my Reports are transmitted directly to the Parliament. I can only be removed from Office by a resolution of both Houses of Parliament in the same session of the Parliament.

My responsibilities include —

- Certify that amounts in the Governor-General's warrants prepared by the Minister for Finance for moneys required from the Commonwealth Public Account are lawfully available.
- Audit the accounts of all departments of State.
- Audit the accounts of the Minister for Finance.
- Examine the annual Statement of Receipts and Expenditure prepared by the Minister for Finance and report on it to the Parliament.
- Audit and inspect the accounts of almost all Commonwealth statutory authorities and report to the appropriate minister on them and on their annual financial statements.
- Conduct efficiency audits of departments and statutory authorities.

Up till recently my charter was, strictly speaking, restricted to financial and compliance audits but nevertheless increasing emphasis has been placed on informing Parliament of those cases where, in the Auditor-General's opinion, value for money was not obtained for particular expenditures.

As most of you are aware, in 1979 the Audit Act was amended (as has been that of Queensland) to authorise me to conduct efficiency audits, not only of Commonwealth departments, but also Commonwealth statutory authorities and wholly owned companies. Special arrangements may also be made for the examination of joint Commonwealth/State activities if the State(s) concerned concurs.

The way efficiency audits fit into the hierarchy of auditing has been described by Professor Cutt in the following terms:

> "Accountability may be defined in a hierarchy of increasing sophistication and potential usefulness but corresponding increasing operational difficulty. The lowest level is fiscal or fiduciary accountability, relating to the actual expenditure of funds and procedures by which that expenditure is accounted for. The second level is efficiency accountability, defined in terms of the ratio of some physical measure of output to cost. The most sophisticated level is effectiveness accountability in which the output measures used reflect the attainment of objectives or programs. Corresponding to these levels is a hierarchy of approaches to auditing, namely financial, efficiency and effectiveness auditing."[6]

I should add that responsibility for co-ordinating effectiveness auditing lies in the Commonwealth with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. With the introduction of efficiency auditing, there is a new instrument of accountability, not only for the expenditure for moneys but for other resources including manpower.

Financing of Education

You are no doubt aware that the Commonwealth has no constitutional power in the field of education except in its own territories. The Commonwealth has, however, assisted the States which traditionally have carried the responsibility for education by means of general purpose financial assistance grants and more particularly by special purpose grants made under section 96 of the Constitution.

So far as my role is concerned, in the case of general purpose grants, action is limited to ensuring that these payments to the States are properly authorised and made.

Special purpose grants usually have conditions attached as to the purposes for which the moneys may be spent. Again my role is limited to ensuring that these payments are properly authorised and paid, but in many cases, State Auditors-General are required to provide certificates that the moneys have been properly expended for the specified purposes.

The general pattern of Commonwealth Involvement

Prior to the establishment of the Universities Commission in 1943, Commonwealth involvement in the field of education was for all practical purposes, limited to its own territories. In that year the Walker Committee was appointed and its main recommendations were incorporated in the first national Education Act of 1945. That Act also provided for the establishment of the Commonwealth Office of Education.

Over the years the recommendations of education committees have usually resulted in the creation of a permanent Commonwealth education commission. For instance the Murray Report (1957) led to the establishment of the Australian Universities Commission (1959), the Martin Report

(1964) preceded the Commission on Advanced Education (1965)[7], the Karmel Report (1973) preceded the Schools Commission (1973) and the Kangan Report (1974) preceded the Technical and Further Education Commission (1975).

Tertiary Education

Specific purpose grants to the States for education were first introduced in 1951-52. These grants were for recurrent expenditure and authorised by way of the States Grants (Universities) Act. Following an inquiry in 1957 by the Murray Committee, grants were expanded to cover capital works and equipment on a triennial basis.

Capital grants to the States for colleges of advanced education were initially made in 1965-66 as a result of the Martin Report. Assistance for recurrent grants followed in 1966-67.

Capital grants for the construction and equipping of state teachers colleges were made from 1967 onwards. In February 1972, the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Science and the Arts recommended that the Commonwealth support teachers' colleges on the same terms as colleges of advanced education and that teacher training institutions not associated with universities be incorporated as integral parts of colleges of advanced education.

In 1964, the Commonwealth government extended its capital grants to technical schools under the States Grants (Science Laboratories and Technical Training) Act 1964.

The Commonwealth government assumed full responsibility for the financing of tertiary education from the beginning of 1974.

Primary and Secondary Education

The States Grants (Science Laboratories and Technical Training) Act of 1964 marked the commencement of Commonwealth funding of schools.

Per capita (recurrent) grants for private schools were first paid in 1969-70 and from January 1972 the Commonwealth commenced non-specific funding of capital expenditure in government schools.

In 1970, a child migrant education program and a system of Aboriginal secondary scholarships were established.

Public expenditure on education rose from 2.1 percent of gross domestic product in 1956-57 to 5.8 percent in 1976-77. Whereas in 1956-57 the Commonwealth financed 2.6 percent of public expenditure in education, in 1976-77 it provided 42.1 percent.[8] Public expenditure on education was $262m in 1957-58, $801m in 1967-68 and $4,732m in 1976-77.[9] These figures illustrate the great significance education has in both economic as well as social terms and the dramatic change in the respective roles of the States and the Commonwealth in the field of education.

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION BY SECTOR: 1961-62 to 1976-77

	1961-62	1967-68	1976-77
	$m	$m	$m
Schools	289	509	2906
Universities	73	149	651
Other Post-secondary*	32	92	783
Other**	36	51	392
TOTAL	429	801	4732
Total as percent of GDP	2.9	3.3	5.8

* Includes expenditure in the categories 'vocational' and 'other higher' as used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

**Includes expenditure on general administration, research, migrant education, transportation of students, etc.

Source: Williams Report, p. 34.

Commonwealth outlay on education for 1979-80 is estimated at $2,570 million, of which $1,946.8 million will be payments to the States.

Various Models of Financing and Effects on Accountability

There is a range of possible combinations of Commonwealth/State/Regional participation in the funding of education activities. At one end of the range, responsibility for policy making and the administering of funds might be solely in the hands of the Commonwealth and at the other extreme, complete delegation of responsibility to the individual education institutions.

The complexity of the present system of financing education gives rise to problems with respect to questions of accountability mainly because the lines of responsibility of the Commonwealth and State governments and the numerous statutory authorities and governing/regulatory bodies are not always clear.

The Canadian Royal Commission on Financial Management and Accountability pointed out that in order to achieve effective accountability the following 3 factors must exist:

i) Objectives/goals defined: responsibility assigned

ii) A reporting system or systems

iii) Reported results reviewed to evaluate performance.

One aspect of the third factor has been discussed when we briefly examined the role of the Auditor-General as an independent review body.

As regards the definition of *objectives*, we are faced with a system whereby two levels of government are responsible for financing education and hence planning. Berkeley[10] points out the problem of this shared responsibility:

> "Constitutionally, the provision of education is the responsibility of the States. However, given the de facto Federal involvement in planning (through specific purpose grants) the question must be asked whether two planning agencies are preferable to and more effective than one. Resource allocation must involve planning. Planning involves the careful consideration of objectives, their ordering in priority and the acceptance of programs to achieve these objectives. When two agencies are allocating the resources, problems must arise . . . . . The problems of conflicting priorities have their roots in the very nature of specific purpose payments.
>
> "In education, as we have seen, earmarking has been a feature of most specific purpose grants. Given the magnitude of the funds made available to the States for education in the form of specific purpose grants, a fundamental principle is directly involved."

Jay, commenting on the growth of specific purpose grants, summarised it in this way:

> "It betokens a change of emphasis in intergovernmental relations from revenue sharing to cost sharing, and raises the possibility of a substitution of the priorities of the national government for those of the State governments in some fields of expenditure which, under the Commonwealth Constitution, are the responsibility of the States."[11]

This view has been emphasised with more vigour on the American scene when in reviewing several books on Federal Funding and Education Policy Making in Public Administration Review, Stavisky says:

> "The manner in which the United States government had broadened its scope and influence in the field of education seems strikingly reminiscent of the study of imperialism and world politics . . . All too frequently, what began as a stream of support degenerated into a sphere of influence."[12]

We are then led to the view that because of this shared responsibility, the definition of goals for the education system may well be confused and at times these may be conflicting.

The *reporting* systems also appear to leave something to be desired. At the tertiary level, the Tertiary Education Commission has accepted responsibility for monitoring the way in which that system develops. Among other things it:

- Collects annually information on students, staff, courses, libraries and finance and subjects this to analysis with a view to assessing past developments and likely future trends;
- Administers building programs to ensure that the Commission's objectives in supporting particular projects are met;
- Receiving from tertiary institutions and authorities detailed plans and discussing these plans with them;

- Publishes triennial reports reviewing the immediate past, recommending the development of tertiary institutions over the next three years, together with the broad directions in which the Commission believes tertiary education should move; and
- Publishing reports from time to time on special issues.[13]

The Commission stresses that "evaluations of institutions, courses and graduates (of a kind which involve the measurement of quality) is not a responsibility of the Commission". This appears to be left to the institutions themselves and with certain other bodies concerned with standards. But the Commission does accept a responsibility for facilitating investigations of various activities and practices of tertiary institutions. To this end the Government endorsed the Commission's recommendations by making available within the funding guidelines for 1979, an amount of $180,000 for evaluative studies. (Statement of Tertiary Education Commission to the Joint Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts, September 1979).

In summary therefore it appears that for tertiary institutions, the reporting system and review mechanisms to evaluate performance are widely dispersed and probably not as effective as they should be for full accountability.

As to the Schools area, Berkeley had this to say:

> "The requirements for accountability are laid down in the State Grants (Schools) Act and the accompanying regulations. The chief criticisms of the present accountability requirements have been that too much detail is required, and that in certain instances the information sought is of little or no value, either as an indication of the effect of the funds expended or for interstate and national reporting. This second criticism is particularly relevant to the non-financial information sought."

He adds:

> "In terms of the non-financial information sought, the approach of the Commission remains a simplistic, descriptive one." (Berkeley, pp. 14-15)

If these criticisms are valid, it suggests that the present machinery for accountability could be improved and simplified.

It may be relevant to mention the developments which have occurred in the A.C.T. at the schools level.

On assuming responsibility in January 1974, the Interim A.C.T. Schools Authority set out to design a system which was to be fully responsive to community needs and structured in a more decentralised fashion with largely autonomous schools operating under the direction of the Authority. This was a move away from the highly centralised systems existing in the States. The Hughes Report of 1973 ("A Design for the Governance and Organisation of Education in the A.C.T.") recommended that "Schools boards should have the function of selecting both professional and non-professional staff . . . . involve(ment) in curriculum innovation. These powers coupled

with an effective control over budgeting of school funds, would have meant that school boards could have established and maintained autonomy in respect of resource use and resource mix in their schools."[14]

However, although schools in the A.C.T. enjoy a larger measure of autonomy than their counterparts in the States, they are very much affected by changes in Commonwealth financial attitudes. The staff ceilings imposed by the Public Service Board also have had some constraints on the level of staffing in schools.

In its report, the Schools Commission "believes as a matter of principle, that the Authority must have freedom to allocate and hence be accountable for the way in which it applies its funds; similarly, accountability should extend to school boards which should also be free to use resources allocated to them as needed and be required to account to the community for their use. School boards should be invested with the authority to dispose of cash grants without the impediments of tight financial procedural restrictions other than public reporting and proper auditing. Relatively simple forms of accounting can effectively ensure that adequate public information and accountability requirements are met."[15]

This sounds admirable but I must confess to some cynicism as to the effectiveness of accountability in these circumstances. Without some structured form of accountability, ensuring regular and searching reporting and evaluation, I suggest little will be achieved.

A Partial Solution

Clearly the question of full and effective accountability is a complex one to which no ready answer is available. May I make a couple of suggestions, one of which relates primarily to my field of activity.

My first suggestion is something of a challenge to educationalists. It relates to the setting of objectives. It is generally agreed that accountability in the context we are considering must originate in an unambiguous understanding of the objectives of the activity concerned. It may also be fair to say that the likelihood of the imposition of what may appear as arbitrarily constrained and conflicting implicit objectives on a government program is in direct proportion to the lack of or shortcomings in agreed and declared objectives of the program in the first place. Education is no different from other activities undertaken by democratic governments; there will always be a need for a level of flexibility within a government program in order to enable it to respond effectively to changing needs and aspirations. However, government financed education seems to suffer more than most programs from difficulties in defining its objectives — and it seems to me that these difficulties originate with the educationalists as much as with the nature of our government institutions. Of course, there will always be a range of views as to what education is all about, but so long as this range is wide and its extremes irreconcilable, so will objective-setting remain difficult. Maybe the challenge to educationalists, and researchers in particular, is to narrow this range, reconcile conflict and develop a soundly based consensus within which the objectives of education, at the various levels, could be more clearly identified.

My second suggestion stems from an address at the National Government Accounting Convention in February last by the Chairman of the Commonwealth Public Accounts Committee when he expressed the view that an effective system of joint Federal/State management review of expenditure is essential. Mr Connolly went on to point out that the Auditor-General does not have the constitutional power to investigate the expenditure of Commonwealth funds through State and local governments. Nor has it been possible to achieve agreement between the Commonwealth and the States on a common methodology for the assessment by Auditors-General of the efficiency of government expenditure.

Mr Connolly suggested that the three tiers of government might develop systems for the effective evaluation of overlapping responsibilities. As a first step, the Public Accounts Committee is conducting an inquiry into tertiary education expenditure in the expectation that it will enable the Committee to assess whether it is possible or practicable for reviews of this type to be conducted through the respective Australian Parliaments. That presumably would involve investigations in the first place by Auditors-General, followed by separate inquiries in each State by Parliamentary Committees (such as Public Accounts Committees).

In this paper I have briefly examined the structure of accountability in government administration and then attempted to apply the concepts of responsibility and accountability in the education system. I have also traced the general pattern of the Commonwealth government's involvement in financing of education. The growth in educational expenditure has been significant especially during the last decade. It is therefore of no surprise that taxpayers are seeking regater accountability on the part of those who have been entrusted with the responsibility of administering policies and the way funds are effectively and efficiently expended.

The education system in Australia is a very complex one. Overlapping and lack of clarity in the roles assigned, needless to say, results in confusing lines of accountability. I hope my comments have not added to that confusion.

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STATE/FEDERAL RELATIONSHIPS IN EDUCATION

J. A. ALLEN

Introduction

For some four years, I have had the privilege of attending meetings of the Australian Education Council. This body, established in 1936, originally comprised the Ministers for Education from the six States. Its Standing Committee was the respective Directors-General of Education. As a consequence, the Council was in the nature of a 'States' House' with a major emphasis on school and technical education.

Following the creation of the Commonwealth Department of Education, initially as a Department of Education and Science, there began the custom of inviting the Commonwealth Minister to attend. He ultimately achieved full and equal membership. In more recent times, the Northern Territory Minister has become a member and the New Zealand Minister for Education has attended as an observer with the option to speak.

Progressively, the ambit of the Council's deliberations has been extended to embrace all sectors. The Standing Committee has been correspondingly broadened to include up to three nominees of each Minister, and a free-standing secretariat established.

This brief history reflects the gradually changing relationships between the State and Commonwealth Governments in the area of education, and the growing influence of the Commonwealth in education policy and funding, initially at the margin and then more generally. Senator Carrick, as Commonwealth Minister, saw the Council as a vehicle for the joint development of State/Federal policies in education generally, in keeping with one of the several versions of the New Federalism which have had currency from time to time.

At meetings of the Council one hears expressed a wide variety of opinions reflecting many different attitudes to education in its own right, as an instrument of economic and industrial policy and as an agent for social change. It seems to me to be asking a great deal to expect such a body to be the generator or coordinator of comprehensive national policies in education. In my experience, there have been few occasions when the deliberations and decisions of the Council have had this quality or outcome. Nevertheless, it is an important part of the total political fabric of education in this country.

One of the more interesting rituals which is played out at most meetings begins with an unqualified declaration by a State Minister that education is the constitutional responsibility of the States. Due obeisance is paid to this sentiment before the Council passes on to its next business. It is a view which continues to be widely held in apparent contradiction to the march of history.

The Constitutional Responsibility for Education

It is not my purpose here to attempt a detailed analysis of constitutional developments in this country since 1901 and their impact on education.

Indeed, I am not competent to do so and would refer you to the books by Birch[1] and Smart[2] which provide useful reading texts on this subject. I have no reason to doubt the validity of the facts cited by them or of most of their interpretations of the changing constitutional relationships between the States and the Commonwealth in the area of education.

Education is not an explicit head of power conferred upon the Commonwealth under Section 51 of the Constitution. For about the first twenty years of federation this issue was scarcely raised in debate. The reasons for this are not surprising. The Constitution was new and therefore widely accepted as literally binding; education was a well entrenched domestic activity of colonial governments before Federation; there had been little debate on this issue at the conventions which preceded Federation; the membership of the High Court was dominated by those who had had an association with the framing of the Constitution.

Changes began to take place around 1920 and have proceeded apace more or less ever since. The well known Engineers' Case in 1920 and the Main Roads Case in 1926 not only seriously questioned the supposed limitation on Commonwealth powers, but began to give a new meaning to the grants power under the redoubtable Section 96. This Section is worth quoting in full.

> 96. 'During a period of ten years after the establishment of the Commonwealth and thereafter until the Parliament otherwise provides, the Parliament may grant financial assistance to any State on such terms and conditions as the Parliament thinks fit.'

Initially, this provision was apparently conceived as one of the means of bringing into the Federation reluctant States who felt their financial futures might be jeopardised in the larger brotherhood. In the event, it has come to be one of the principal elements through which the Commonwealth Government has substantially influenced policies and practices in education and in other fields for which it has no explicit head of power.

The Second World War generated a further spate of changes. Uniform taxation first introduced as a wartime measure has continued ever since. Despite some challenges, the States have shown a remarkable and consistent unwillingness to accept the responsibility of raising their own income tax revenue. This has given the Commonwealth Government such overwhelming financial clout that, in combination with Section 96, much of the financial sovereignty of the States has been undermined.

The wartime manpower regulations led to the first provision of scholarships for students in reserved faculties in universities. This significant initiative was to be widely extended in the period that followed.

The immediate post-war years were dominated by policies of the Labor Government directed to post-war reconstruction. These bristled with educa-

tion initiatives, many of which are associated with the name of J. J. Dedman. Among them were the grants to the universities to provide facilities to meet the demands of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme for ex-servicemen, the establishment of the Australian National University and all that this implied, and the introduction of a more permanent form of Commonwealth tertiary scholarships.

A key development in this period was the inclusion in 1946 of Placitum XXIIIA in Section 51 of the Constitution. This reads as follows:

(XXIIIA) *'The provision of maternity allowances, widows' pensions, child endowment, unemployment, pharmaceutical, sickness and hospital benefits, medical and dental services (but not so as to authorize any form of civil conscription), benefits to students and family allowances.'*

Of special importance in education was the provision for benefits to students on which subsequently was based a wide range of benefits to students pursuing courses at various levels. There was even a view current at that time, championed by H. V. Evatt, that this inclusion could provide the Commonwealth with a general head of power in respect of education.

That this view could be seriously entertained is partly a reflection of the changes in the style and direction of interpretations of the Constitution by the High Court which began to emerge in the late 1920s and progressively gathered strength in the succeeding years. In general terms, these changes were more forward-looking than in earlier times, more liberal in spirit and more encouraging to Commonwealth Governments to embark on initiatives outside their explicit heads of power.

The multiple developments in the 1950s and 1960s were in turn a manifestation of this favourable climate. The Murray and Martin reports led to major initiatives in the funding by the Commonwealth on a shared basis with the States of universities and colleges of advanced education. The school science laboratories program initiated in 1963 and the school libraries program in 1968 were significant but cautious developments in the Commonwealth's presence in education at the school level.

This caution was clearly not related to any constitutional limitations, as R. G. Menzies, himself, clearly indicated in his address *'The Challenge of Federalism'* in 1960 in the following words:

> 'Looking, therefore, at the Australian experience, one may see that there has been a strong centralising tendency in relation to power, partly by an enlarged doctrine of interpretation of Commonwealth powers, partly by the pressures exercised by two wars in which the defence power of the Commonwealth received the most far-reaching interpretation, partly by the incorporation in the Constitution of the Financial Agreement with the control which it sets up of borrowing for public works, partly by the consequences of uniform tax laws enacted during the war, and since carried on, and partly, of course, by the rising significance of Australia in world affairs and the obvious need for having a national Government which can speak with authority, on behalf of the nation.'

Menzies' approach to Commonwealth involvement in school funding was the product of concerns about forward financial commitments and an historical appreciation of the vexed 'State aid' issue which had so dominated the Australian education debate since the 1880s. The latter was, however, finally swept away with the school science laboratories program in the light of political needs for the 1963 election and perceived changes in community attitudes to 'State aid'.

The whole involvement of the Commonwealth Government in education took a major leap forward with the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in December 1972. This Government had no inhibitions about utilizing to the maximum the benefits to students provision and, more particularly, the unfettered nature of Section 96.

The programs enacted during the Whitlam years, especially those associated with the Karmel Committee and the subsequent Schools Commission, need no detailed description here. The assumption by the Commonwealth with the agreement of the States of full financial responsibility for universities and colleges of advanced education from 1974 was another salient development.

While growth in these commitments have been curtailed somewhat by the Fraser Government since 1976, there has been a substantial growth since that time in the Commonwealth funding of technical and further education, especially as regards capital grants. Across all sectors of education, the Commonwealth Government now has a major financial and policy presence which seems unlikely to decline in the future.

Commonwealth Policies and Attitudes

The overview of the period from 1941 to the present time involves four distinctive phases in so far as Commonwealth policies in education are concerned. These are conveniently identified as the Curtin/Chifley years to 1948, the Menzies era incorporating also the prime ministerships of Holt, Gorton and McMahon, the Whitlam period from 1972-75 and the period since then in which there have been substantial pauses, the general trend has undoubtedly been in the direction of increasing involvement. This enhancement has embraced both an increasing number of policies and programs as well as a growth in funds from Commonwealth sources devoted to them individually and as a whole.

With the election of the Whitlam Labor Government, the path was clear for major new initiatives by that Government in the schools area both State and private.

Many of these initiatives had their foundations in policy questions of social change, the provison of greater equality of opportunity and redistribution of income among the various socio-economic groups set out in Labor Party policy documents and binding on its parliamentary wing.

The decision by the Whitlam Government in 1973 to take over the total funding responsibility for universities and colleges of advanced education represented a further major change in Commonwealth Govern-

ment policy. Until this occurred, the previously existing shared funding arrangements for both recurrent and capital resources had left the States with significant powers backed by their own financial contributions.

Under the shared funding arrangements some State Governments were seldom able or willing to provide funds at a level which would permit their respective States to claim the maximum sum potentially available from the Commonwealth Government. As a consequence, the recommendations of the Universities Commission, for example, in its earlier days were often shaped by the limitations on State contributions.

With the assumption by the Commonwealth Government of full funding responsibilities for universities and CAEs, State powers to control the distribution of resources in these sectors diminished. While the distributions among the various funding categories and among institutions to be included in the relevant States Grants Legislation are still discussed with State Governments before being enacted, there is in reality little which a State Government can do to achieve major changes in the distribution of funds for which the Commonwealth proposes to legislate.

In principle at least, State Governments have always had the option of declining to accept grants under Section 96 on the grounds that the conditions attached to them were unacceptable. Practical and political realities, however, seriously discount this possibility.

The general approach often adopted by States has been to accept the conditions initially prescribed by the Commonwealth in the hope of amending in the future those which are less than fully acceptable. A second option is to seek to have adopted consultative and administrative processes at the bureaucratic level aimed at achieving as closely as possible the match between the priorities of the State Government concerned and the Commonwealth's proposals in respect of grants.

While there continues to be a fair amount of political rhetoric concerning the preservation of the States' powers in respect of university and advanced education, the reality is that many of the key powers have now passed into Commonwealth hands. During the Fraser years, some moves have been made by the Commonwealth Government to move back to some form of shared funding. While undoubtedly State Governments would like to have the degree of control which this would give to them, they have shown great reluctance to embrace this possibility largely for fear that the total Commonwealth funds would decrease.

The comparison between the impact of total Commonwealth funding of universities and colleges of advanced education is of some interest. Increasingly, the universities have sought to identify themselves as national institutions, thereby cutting as far as possible the remaining ties with their respective State Governments. In any case, these ties have always been fairly tenuous in policy terms because of the provisions of the individual university acts.

This development has been much less marked in the colleges of advanced education largely, I think, because of the absence of a long

established tradition, the diversity of colleges, the form of the legislation under which colleges of advanced education operate, the existence of State Boards, the range and multiple levels of undergraduate courses offered, the regional nature of a number of colleges of advanced education, and the limited presence of the colleges in research.

There are, of course, situations where this kind of discrimination between universities and colleges is harder to draw, particularly in respect of a number of small and somewhat struggling universities which can scarcely claim the stature of their elder brethren. Moreover, the somewhat cavalier creation overnight of Deakin Universities by combining two colleges of advanced education can scarcely be seen as consistent with the notion of universities as distinctive national institutions.

In so far as schools and TAFE are concerned, these have remained an integral part of the State Governmental apparatus on the traditional departmental model. They are therefore much more closely tied to State policies than is the case in the colleges of advanced education or the universities.

The Commonwealth Government has been sensitive to this situation and cautious in the nature of the grants provided. These, in general, have had a major thrust in the area of capital expenditure. Those provided for recurrent purposes have usually been related to highly specific programs.

Judged in political terms this is a good ploy by the Commonwealth Government. Capital expenditure is very visible electorally; general recurrent expenditure is rather less so. Special programs of a recurrent nature funded by the Commonwealth aiso have the advantage of electoral visibility often out of proportion to the Commonwealth funds provided. Moreover, after funding of these prorgams has gone on for some time, the State has little option but to continue them in the light of public expectations should the Commonwealth choose to withdraw or limit its funding.

It is a rather different matter for the Commonwealth Government to make very major cuts in recurrent resources for universities and colleges of advanced education. The political backlash which would inevitably arise in respect of the diminution of student places and academic and other staff retrenchments would be unacceptable.

The policy time scales adopted by Governments generally in this country on the nominal three year electoral cycle have been dismayingly short. Political survival and advantage inevitably become the dominant features. Whether the combination of successive policy decisions made in this context by the eight Governments constitute, or can even constitute, a comprehensive and stabie policy framework for education at a national level is in some considerable doubt.

In more recent years, various versions of the New Federalism have been canvassed in public. This philosophy generally seeks to return to the States increased responsibilities in various fields including education. Whatever the expectations the Fraser Government may have for this concept, there is, in my view, little concrete evidence that any success has been or

will be achieved. In brief, the centripetal forces in Australian federalism, as in most other federal systems, tend progressively with time to increase. I see no signs that this will change in the longer term in the Australian context.

State Policies and Attitudes

It is much less easy to speak about State policies and attitudes since among the six States there is considerable variation. In geographic, economic and demographic terms, Victoria and New South Wales tend to form a block. Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania are at the extremities and somewhat conditioned by the 'end of the line' syndrome. Quite apart from these factors there is and continues to be at any time something of a division between those States with Labor Governments and those with non-Labor Governments. The Northern Territory attitudes are not yet sufficiently settled to warrant comment at this time.

While it is something of an over-simplification to equate Labor philosophy with centralism, there is nevertheless a tendency for Labor States to look less critically at policies of the Commonwealth Government which in the short or long term enhance central powers. In more isolated non-Labor States such as Queensland and Western Australia, especially in recent times, there is a strong reaction in the opposite direction. This can be identified not only in education but in other significant areas of policy.

In the context of the extensive control by the Commonwealth of public finance generally, one way in which the attitudes of many States is manifested is to seek maximum general reimbursement and specific purpose Section 96 grants from the Commonwealth with minimum constraints and minimum accountability for expenditure. Much of the thrust from the States is directed to this end and constitutes the basis of one of the major general political conflicts between the Commonwealth and State Governments.

In respect of Section 96 grants, the larger and the less constrained they are, the more a State Government hopes to deploy these resources in terms of its own priorities, thereby maximizing its own political advantage. On the other hand, the political, especially electoral, advantage to the Commonwealth lies in highly specific grants with tight conditions. The result is usually something of a compromise between these two opposing forces, with the Commonwealth having the whip hand.

The positions adopted by State Governments in respect of Section 96 grants for education cannot be wholly dissociated from the general reimbursement grants to the States which constitute a very large component of the revenue of State Governments. Education and Health constitute two major elements of expenditure in every State Government budget. To the extent that the general grants from the Commonwealth to the States contain in-built growth factors, the State Governments are, in general, likely to be on a fairly comfortable wicket.

The agreements reached during the Whitlam years contained such growth factors. As these agreements come up for renegotiation as has

occurred recently, there is no doubt that the Commonwealth Government, in the light of its present economic policies, will seek to limit or remove such growth factors. The intention of the Commonwealth is that any additional revenue which a State requires should be raised through indirect taxation or by utilizing the capacity to have an additional levy on income tax collected on its behalf.

An important side issue arises where Commonwealth grants are predominantly for capital purposes. These create a contingent liability on the State for the operational expenditure associated with such new facilities. For example, the current considerable capital grants from Commonwealth sources for TAFE colleges carry with them a substantial commitment for recurrent funding by the States if these new facilities are to be fully developed, staffed and operated effectively.

In respect of educational policies as such, State Governments have tended to adopt fairly strongly polar positions in respect of the universities on the one hand, and the schools and TAFE colleges on the other. In respect of the universities, State Governments take relatively little interest in their operations. For schools and TAFE colleges there is a strong element of detailed political control. The advanced education sector sits somewhere in the middle between these two extremes. Its accountability to the State is often high, yet its funding is derived from the Commonwealth.

Many of the most critical discussions and decisions on the funding of the advanced education sector are derived from relationships between the relevant State Board on the one hand, and the Advanced Education Council and the Tertiary Education Commission on the other. Even where, as in Queensland, the recommendations of the Board of Advanced Education to the Commonwealth authorities are subject to the approval of the Minister and Cabinet, there remains a feeling among some Ministers and members of Parliament and a sizeable section of the community that the State Government does not have as much detailed control over the colleges of advanced education as these people would wish.

Part of this concern arises from ignorance of the nature of Section 96 grants and of the detailed processes associated with their procurement, deployment and accountability. The implications of the extensive relationships between the coordinating Board and the State Minister are also not fully appreciated. The Sixth Interim Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education demonstrates that its members seem not to have understood these several issues.

A particular area of considerable current interest relates to the recent changes in the Remuneration Tribunals Act 1973. Part III of this Act incorporates the legislative basis of the Academic Salaries Tribunal. Until 1979, this Tribunal had, as far as the States were concerned, been a body which after comprehensive periodic reviews recommended salary scales in universities and colleges of advanced education on an across-the-board basis.

Such recommendations, if accepted by the Commonwealth Government, became the basis for calculating grants. While not binding on State Governments, instrumentalities or institutions in the States, the scales nevertheless

had a very powerful influence on the academic salary structures and, with a few exceptions, were close to being as effective as a mandatory requirement.

The decision in 1979 by the Commonwealth Government under pressure from the State Government of Victoria to amend the legislation to provide that the Tribunal could deal with particular categories of academic staff outside the framework of a general review opened a wholly new era in industrial relations. Despite considerable and substantial warnings by the Queensland Government of the consequences of this step, the Commonwealth Government proceeded nevertheless.

Within a year, the Queensland predictions have proved only too accurate. Any benefits that might be gained by this change are more than outweighed by the financial and other costs involved. Moreover, there is now a potential for the Academic Salaries Tribunal to become a quasi-arbitral body. Though established under Commonwealth legislation, its findings on specific issues could have a major effect on long established industrial and employment policies determined by State Governments and enshrined in State legislation. It is an interesting question whether this Commonwealth Government initiative was an act of deliberate policy to achieve a shift in the balance of responsibility in this area in the direction of the Commonwealth. Certainly it seems to be no accident.

A somewhat similar issue of concern to the States relates to the attitudes of the Commonwealth Government to the Australian Council on Awards in Advanced Education. This Council established in 1971 operates under an inter-ministerial agreement to which the Ministers, State and Commonwealth, are equal signatories. Its functions relate to the promotion of common nomenclature for awards in advanced education and the national registration of these awards. The detailed accreditation is undertaken by the relevant State or Territory authorities, but the Council is required to satisfy itself that the conditions and procedures used are such as to merit the registration of the awards and their associated courses.

In recent years a number of moves have been initiated by the Commonwealth Minister which seem to have as their underlying aim either the bringing of the Council into a formal relationships with the Commonwealth funding authorities or transforming it into a body more closely related to Commonwealth interests and capable of being influenced to a much greater extent from this quarter. To date, these moves have been substantially resisted by the States, their respective governments being unwilling to see accreditation of courses pass to more centralized control.

These kinds of developments illustrated by the cases of the Academic Salaries Tribunal and the Australian Council on Awards in Advanced Education appear to be symptomatic of an underlying philosophy of the Commonwealth to assume whenever possible a more directive or controlling role in respect of the States.

The Future

Mark Twain once said that May was a very bad month for making predictions, so were June, July, August, September, etc. Any predictions

about future State/Federal relationships in education are necessarily personal and speculative. In formulating these, it is, however, difficult to avoid extrapolating from the events of the past forty years. Such an extrapolation and the considerations outlined in this paper lead inexorably to a number of conclusions briefly as follows:

1. The proposition that education is a unique constitutional responsibility of the States cannot be sustained. At best, the constitutional responsibility is a shared one, with the balance strongly favouring the Commonwealth.

2. The universities will become increasingly the actual or de facto responsibility of the Commonwealth. State Governments will retain the chartering responsibility and the appointment of governing bodies, but little else.

3. The schools and TAFE will continue to be primarily the responsibility of State Governments, but with important initiatives being controlled by Commonwealth policies and through the allocation of resources.

4. The advanced education sector is likely to be the stage on which the next act in the evolution of State/Federal relationships is played.

5. The complexity of State/Federal relationships in education is likely to increase. The costs of conducting these relationships, already high, will increase with little if any public benefit.

6. The nature of parliamentary government in Australia does not hold out great hopes for the development of long term rational, national plans for education or for many other areas.

In the final analysis, he who pays the piper will assuredly call the tune.

ISSUES OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

R. SCOTT

The Conference circular contains the following passage which I would like to take as my point of departure for a rather circuitous tour around the notion of "Social Accountability":

> "External examinations have been abolished, permitting the introduction of subjects geared to the needs of new cohorts in our secondary school system. Problems have arisen because the enthusiasm, professional expertise, and high ideals of innovators have not been matched by an awareness of a need for a public relations exercise to prepare the general public for changes. As well, we lack knowledge of the most effective methods to be used to counter the opposition of a small but vocal minority. You'll hear of this in our segment on Social Accountability."

I would like to start by issuing a disclaimer about the authorship of that passage, in order to avoid the accusation of false advertising. I would want to disclaim authorship because so much of it is wrong. First, I am not sure that there is the direct causal relationship asserted in the first sentence to exist between abolishing external examinations and the introduction of subjects geared to the needs of new cohorts. There may be, I'm just not sure, just as I'm not sure that we know enough of the needs of students (as opposed to their wants) to be certain that we have geared up to meet them.[1]

Also I would not want to let slip by the implication in that quotation from the brochure that the innovators are *always* distinguished by enthusiasm, professional expertise and high ideals. Some innovators may be responding to change only because it is forced upon them, some may be inexpert and unprofessional and still others may be cynical, pragmatic and Machiavellian. I wouldn't want anyone to think that I, for one, assume that only the innovators are entitled to be dressed in white cowboy hats or shining armour. Many innovators are bumbling, incompetent and unprofessional; the nature of their task makes them both visible and accident-prone. Again, I have written elsewhere on the notion of *professional* expertise in the context of accountability and autonomy.[2] There is much more involved here than mere public relations.

Finally, I would want to dissociate myself from the proposition that "we lack nowledge of the most effective methods to be used to counter the opposition of a small vocal minority". As a political scientist, I would assert that we do have as much knowledge as we need; what is lacking is resources and willingness to work with these resources. Nor would I accept that the implied opposition to innovators is without foundation, or deserving to be "countered". I personally have a deep philosophical commitment to the encouragement of dissent as a basis for the advancement of learning. I

would not want to deny this right of dissent to any minority, however wrong-headed it might be in not bowing to the dictates of the professionals. Indeed, from my own research into the fundamentalist groups active in this state concerning aspects of education policy, I have concluded that there have been some valuable spin-offs from their activities.[3] While I abhor the fact that they have extended State censorship of curriculum from malpractice into accepted dogma, I also recognise that their success underlined the extent to which teachers and their educators in tertiary institutions were getting out of touch with political and social realities.

On page 2 of the brochure, those attending the conference are promised a galaxy of talent in each session — first someone distinguished, then a reactor and then an eminent educationist. I am sorry to have got you here on false pretences on the first count. I am more "distinctive" rather than "distinguished" — distinctive in having had only a passing exposure to the non-tertiary sector of the education industry. When in Canberra I posed for a while as a "professional lay person", being chairman of a primary school board when they first started under the aegis of Phil Hughes and Hedley Beare. This led me to write somewhat bitterly on the theme of "participatory impotence".[4] Since coming here, my wife and I have found a certain morbid fascination with the activities of diverse interest groups active in the education sector. But I still bear the rather doubtful label — not of educationist but political scientist, or even more doubtfully, that of "public administrationist".[5]

In as much as I have anything to offer the real experts on education assembled here in front of me, it relates to my study of politics as a practical and philosophical activity and my own experience in the tertiary sector. Both here and in Canberra I have taken a keen interest in the decisionmaking processes of the institution in which I try to function. I have sought to understand both the immediate and the external environment and to make sense of what causes decisions to be made which affect me. For a student of administration, it is the ultimate in navel-gazing. But, to conclude my reference to the brochure, I agree with the anonymous author that we do need to understand more clearly the decisionmaking processes which affect our collective destinies, as well as "the demands peculiar to each sector". The sectors are inextricably intertwined by the nature of the training and recruitment processes which operate in all states. If I seem to concentrate on the tertiary sector, this is partly because it is the one I know best and partly because I believe all of education will suffer if that sector is allowed to be "whipped into line" by governments acting in the name of social accountability. Indeed, as my text for the morning I would propose Nilsson's axiom that "to punish academics is very good politics".[6]

Let us recall just how widespread these demands are and how popular those who espouse the cause of accountability can become in an era where politicians are searching for scapegoats to blame for their own inadequacies. Remember in particular that this is not a new phenomenon. Over two years ago I made the following comment in my inaugural lecture:

"There is now a vast repertoire of criticisms which can be drawn upon, but most of the themes are touched upon in television current affairs programs such as Peter Samuels and Don Chipp on *Monday Conference*[7] and summarized in the following newspaper item:

EDUCATION FUNDING 'OUT OF CONTROL'

The Minister for Education, Mr Jones, claimed yesterday that the funding arrangements for tertiary education had got out of control. The free education system introduced by the Labor Government had set a growth pattern in tertiary institutions that did not reflect the true needs of the community. The system had encouraged competition between institutions, which vied for increasing per capita grants to undertake more courses requiring more buildings to cope with the increasing number of students. "It is because of the faults and weaknesses inherent in the present funding arrangements that I have supported the Federal Government's stocktaking in the whole field of tertiary education," he said. "*Rationalization must relate to the needs of the community and accountability meant more than just financial responsibility. It also meant accountability to society — to provide not only what potential students thought they needed but to offer courses that society needed.* Institutions must relate more directly to community needs than they had in the past. They did not have the sole right to determine their own destiny under the current funding arrangements."[8]

The most recent version of this line of attack has appeared in that literally sensational journal, *Penthouse*.[9] If the publication is still legal in Queensland, I commend it to the audience (if it's not legal, then I may be guilty of incitement to commit a crime). In the immediate aftermath of reading this article, I was tempted to sub-title my talk "in defence of bullshit". But this seemed on reflection to make the mistake of joining the author in the barnyard of his own journalism.

THE FAILURE OF EDUCATION

There has been a disaster in Australian tertiary education, a torrent of money poured into universities and colleges of advanced education in the past decade has left these institutions bloated with students, wealthy beyond the dreams of their forebears and totally corrupted in their intellectual standards, bewildered and confused about what they are supposed to be doing. They are rotten with over-indulgence in expansion and in the wild, greedy, slavering race by their controllers for bigger jobs, more students, more pay. It has been a disgusting spectacle: one which simply underlines again the importance of imposing harsh controls on the use of public money. What is there to show for the great boom of the Seventies on Australian tertiary education?

We got an army of half-baked, half-educated, misinformed, crammed, bored, bigoted and confused "liberal arts" majors; we got a corps of equally confused, frightened and misinformed

"business and commerce studies majors"; and finally we got wave upon wave of resentful, lazy, half-baked school teachers.

The past ten years have seen massive destruction of tertiary education through the "forced feed" of masses of students through the bullshit courses.

The tertiary education system in Australia has developed along the following lines: vast quantities of money are pumped in at one end and vast quantities of half-bake graduates in bullshit courses in liberal arts (of which the major categories are English, History, Philosophy, Modern Languages), teacher training and business studies, come out the other end.

A second article in the same journal provided a more dignified attack along the same lines, including the following ominous sentence:[10]

> "Quite apart from the issues of how much is being spent and how high is the standard of instruction, the validity of *what* is being taught must also be questioned."

The true threat posed by a notion of social accountability is encapsulated in the assertion that society might legitimately seek to dictate to tertiary institutions *what* they teach rather than merely requiring that the institutions themselves operate effectively — i.e., *how* they teach. There is clearly a close connection between the "what" and the "how" since taxpayers have a keen interest in the directions in which their money is spent by teachers. But the real threat to the tertiary sector is posed not by demands for accountability *per se* but by demands to control what is taught beyond a very general specification of the standards appropriate to particular professional qualifications. The essence of tertiary institutions, sometimes glibly defined as "academic freedom", is that residue of autonomy which involves the defence of the values of tolerance and dissent — found most conspicuously in the very subject areas labelled as bullshit by Mr Newton of *Penthouse*.

If we are to accept any area of protection, then we must also be able to define more clearly what is meant by accountability. This is a theme which has been examined on a number of occasions and often in contradictory ways. The most recent collection of views that I have seen is in a set of papers assembled by HERDSA and edited by Sheldrake and Linke.[11] It may assist our discussions if I examine these papers in detail since they indicate some of the confusions and disagreements over what could possibly be meant by "social accountability". As Harman and Johnson point out in their paper, "Because the terms 'society' and 'community' mean different things to different people, to say that higher education institutions are or should be accountable to society or the community does not tell us very much at all."[12]

The authors in this collection are generally guilty of a failure to confront some of the genuine grounds for claims being advanced for greater accountability. Many of them refuse to recognise that there are skeletons in the academic cupboards which need to be dragged out into the hard light

of day, rather than shrouded in an all-embracing blanket labelled academic freedom. That blanket will wear too thin if it seems to be covering too much; its use needs to be restricted to those areas of activity in institutions of higher education where it really matters. Because it does really matter that the blanket remains intact, the essential role of institutions of higher education will rapidly evaporate if they are left naked and vulnerable to direct and unrestricted governmental interference.

Several of the papers traverse roughly similar ground, particularly in defining key terms like accountability. But it is here that the woolliness and inconsistency creep in. Not everybody is talking about the same thing and there is a particular tendency to confuse accountability and responsibility. It is with great relief that one gets to the final chapter and finds that Nilsson is equally unimpressed by the methodological and semantic imprecision. While paying tribute to those authors who do have a clear knowledge of what they are about (Chippendale, for example), Nilsson carefully kicks great holes in the platitudes and inconsistencies of many other contributors to the volume and of others whose writings are quoted.

One of the main problems is that the authors each conceive that they have a vested interest to defend — CAE's, teacher educators, staff associations and their concern for redundancy, universities, manpower economists, etc. This leads into special pleading in a number of cases. In particular, there is disagreement about whether universities are really so special that they need treatment which differentiates their level of accountability from that of CAE's. (TAFE scarcely gets a mention, reinforcing the definitional convention which seems to be gaining ground that higher education is a subset of tertiary education). The university protagonists almost to a man (and they are all men contributors) quote Partridge in his comments on this subject in his report on Western Australia. Nobody then goes on (except Nilsson) to examine what a concern for national or international standards means in specific terms of accountability in contrast to CAE's. Add the blanket assertion of "academic freedom" and the whole university system can be justifiably left to rely on its own devices.

The problem with all this is that the initiative for demanding accountability to governments rests with the governments and not the institutions themselves. Generalised notions of responsibility — to clients, students, parents, communities, professions, interest groups, peer groups, metaphysical ideals or whatever — cut no ice with governments unless they can be made to cut some ice with the voting public. There may well be some sort of ruling class conspiracy to "vocationalize" higher education to render it impotent, as Hyde suggests,[13] but merely asserting alternative patterns of responsibility will not defeat it. It seems more likely anyway that the current criticism of education spending has deeper roots than the preference of a small group of individuals, even those who constitute a hypothetical ruling class.

Chippendale's paper, coming straight after Hyde's, provides a valuable counterpoint to the conspiracy theory, outlining the basis of recent Commonwealth involvement. He sets the issue of education in its broader political

and administrative context of inter-governmental relations and is less pessimistic about the inevitability of total centralisation. In conclusion, he notes that

> "In the long term view it appears inevitable that these (political) limitations will constrain the operation of procedures for accountability, which, for the moment, at the federal level, loom large for tertiary institutions. The future accountability of tertiary education institutions is inevitably caught up in the ebb and flow of the status-conscious bargaining which characterises Commonwealth-State relations in this country."[14]

The chapter by Ramsey and Howlett is one of the more distinguished in the collection,[15] concentrating on the internal arrangements for accountability within institutions. In particular it draws attention to the deleterious effects of formula budgeting in the absence of alternative performance indicators when it comes to qualitative judgements. It also looks at the management implications of the bureaucratic and collegiate models of decision-making and raises basic issues which separate accountability for the quality and nature of the education provided from issues of tenure and academic freedom. They utter in their conclusion the same warning which occurs in several other papers — that institutions will have to be prepared to adopt new structural arrangements or face having such changes imposed externally. Burke and McKenzie concern themselves more with efficient use of resources and responsiveness to community needs, and they conclude by pointing to the real "bogey man" — the anti-intellectualism of Australian society and its political influentials. Referring in particular to the critical character of social sciences, they see that

> "the problem of the public being aware of the activities of tertiary institutions and their possible opposition to some of these activities could be very real in future years."[16]

Some of us feel Queensland is already in this future but we have to recognise that these are remarkably undemocratic sentiments.

And so to the Nilsson mentioned earlier. As a philosopher, he claims no particular expertise in educational administration — apart from his observations as a practising academic. But he does bring a healthy scepticism to the whole exercise and unpacks the semantic importance of prepositions. In particular, he clearly distinguishes between accountability and responsibility by arguing that accountability only makes sense in the notion of being accountable *to* another person. By contrast, one can (and does) feel generally responsible *for* something without necessarily being held accountable *to* someone.

At the risk of vastly over-simplifying his subtle (and amusingly presented) argument, he links accountability with the context of blame and punishment. Responsibility of a generalised kind is transformed into hard accountability when it hurts after you have made an error in judgement. (There is a soft meaning of accountability — merely giving a formal account — which has the potential to harden if someone happens to be listening closely and decides to act, e.g. on a report of a university to parliament).

It is this capacity for punishment which is the core of accountability: as Nilsson notes, "the paradigm of an action or activity failing under the concept 'punishment' is the deliberate infliction by someone in authority, and according to rule, of something unpleasant on an offender because of something he had done or left undone."[17] He then states his axiom that "to punish academics is currently very good politics". It is this punitive/political character of accountability which needs to be singled out from all the slack logic surrounding the notion of accountability defined as a multi-faceted or hydra-headed monster.

If political accountability — with its capacity for inflicting punishment — is at the centre of the debate on socal accountability, on what grounds can such accountability be resisted? In a recent address to the Royal Institute of Public Administration and the Society of Accountants, Professor Hodgetts, a leading public administration scholar from Canada, offered the following analysis.[18] He saw four major types of accountability — vertical accountability (to the political leadership linked through the bureaucratic hierarchy), outward accountability to clients, lateral accountability to peer groups and inward accountability to individual judgement and morality.

Applying Hodgett's classification to education, it is clear that it is the vertical accountability that hurts. If education fails to please our political masters at state or federal level, then educators are punished by having their funds cut off. Gone is the Whitlam heyday when any plausible fool could sell an idea and get public funds and public employment to indulge himself. In the process, the pruning shears have cut out some deadwood, but regrettably it is often the best and the brightest who are being cut out; the indolent, under-qualified and incompetent go soldiering on to damage the cause of education even further. I *know* this to be a problem in universities and CAE's; I *suspect* the same may apply at the school level.

The conference members might want to examine the Hodgett directions of accountability more closely in the context of the individual school — especially the issue of vertical accountability.

Increasingly, the other levels of accountability are becoming dependent variables, contributing to vertical accountability but not themselves independent of that central control over funds. Thus accountability to clientele in education now takes the form of competition for students because of the formula budgetting which ties an institution's income to its gross numbers. This is now a well-established dynamic in the tertiary sector, as institutions, departments and individual teachers adjust their behaviour to maximise the numbers that they can attract. (From a brief news item, it seems that the effect of unzoning schools in the A.C.T. is having a similar effect there, with newspaper advertisements now touting for custom just like most of their tertiary big brothers). The threat to academic standards is obvious, particularly when the punishment for failure to attract students may mean lowered financial expectations or even redundancy. Suddenly, clients have a capacity to hurt where previously they had to take what the educators served up to them. But — given the inevitable threat to standards posed by chasing warm bodies for financial gain — the instruments of vertical

accountability are then placed under greater stress. It is clearly not in the political interests of any government to reduce the education system to a laughing stock inhabited by Mickey Mouses. (Mickey Mice?)

The same problem applies to lateral accountability — to peer groups. Much has been said — in the book quoted earlier and by education spokesmen elsewhere — about the need for Australia's leading tertiary institutions to set the tone of the whole education sector by adhering to international standards in all they do. And Harman and Johnston in that book make the very sensible recommendation that we ought to adopt the procedures of British universities in using leading figures from other academic institutions as external examiners across the whole range of teaching activities, not just as thesis examiners. They also advocate greater use of institutional reviews of the type practised by the A.N.U. (perhaps because they are so obviously under the noses of their political masters and have traditionally been the envy of other less-lavishly financed institutions). Much depends on the motivation of those who have generated the idea of the review and are responsible for its implementation. A similar review was recently undertaken at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education covering the whole institution. It is still not clear whether this has had any impact on the functioning of the institute.[19]

These sorts of devices are undoubtedly capable of inflicting pain if their reports are unfavourable and the recommendations then constitute the basis for action by the political/administrative decisionmakers who control the relevant bags of public gold. Again, a dependent variable. But one which is capable of being manipulated by the educators themselves since peer group evaluation operates in two directions. It will be very easy for a rather cosy relationship to emerge if the evaluators and evaluated are constantly swapping hats. Appealing to professional integrity may work in some circumstances but there is an equal likelihood that back-scratching may prevail, just as it does in so many other professions such as law and medicine. Even on an international scale, there is likely to be a closing of ranks among "us" educators against "them" paymasters; after all, the same process of threatening education with massive retrenchment is a universal phenomenon. The only alternative is to have the political leadership recruit a pariah class of evaluators, charged with guarding the sacred flame of standards, both academic and administrative. (This may already be happening as states staff up their central regulatory agencies from among the ranks of the mobile senior academics). At an institutional level, there is an increasing tendency for concerned senior administrators like Vicechancellors or Directors to appoint middle-management supervisors (fulltime "super-deans") divorced from loyalty to particular disciplines and particular staff groupings.

But it must be clear that peer group evaluation is a weak basis for defence against demands for greater vertical autonomy. The A.M.A. and the Bar Association may have got away with defending their autonomy by way of self-regulating professional groups, but even they are under threat from radical or even reformist governments; it seems unlikely that politicians are going to allow educators to "get away" with the same sort of arrange-

ment — unlike medicine, education is not literally a matter of life and death; unlike lawyers, regrettably few educators win election to parliament. An alternative strategy is to colonise the relevant section of the bureaucracies, along the lines so successfully developed by the R.S.L. with respect to the Department of Veterans Affairs and Health, and this may already be happening accidentally as educators are recruited into the departments at state and federal level. But, in the wider political arena, there will be plenty of politicians who will successfully pour scorn on a defence of autonomy based upon the opinions of our own colleagues.

This is even more true of a claim to "social" accountability based on a structure of control where the local community is represented on boards of management. In some cases, these boards are vehicles for individuals to ride pet hobby-horses either in defence of the institutions or in criticism of some particular aspect of its activities.

In others, the management board is a "front" for a group of other educators testing their administrative and educational theories in a different context — this was certainly the result of a survey which was conducted into the membership of school boards in the A.C.T.[20] and it is noticeable that councils of CAE's in urban areas often contain members from other tertiary institutions. All of which contributes to *peer group* "accountability" but adds very little to genuine *community* "accountability" — indeed, we ought not to use these terms at all but settle for the weaker notion of "responsiveness".

The arguments get even more tenuous when this claim to accountability rests on internal values and judgements. This is not to deny that individual teachers feel a high sense of "responsibility" for what they do, but there is an apparent semantic nonsense in the notion of "internal accountability". St Joan tried this line of defence of "inner voices" and look what the authorities did to her. Vertical accountability indeed.

Is Plato dead then? What is to become of the philosopher — kings who wore the blanket of academic freedom like robes of office. Must educators knuckle under to a servile relationship with their political masters and stand idly by while the academic empires crumble?

I would contend that there are special areas where universities and colleges ought not to be accountable to governments. But these special areas will get ignored if the tertiary institutions try to defend themselves against *all demands* for political accountability. Following Nilsson, it is possible to claim that there are areas of activity where the role-responsibility of academics requires them *not* to subordinate their professional judgement to that of their political masters (or of their students, for that matter). In this sense, it would be irresponsible for them to be held accountable.

What, then, are these special areas? What is it that distinguishes tertiary institutions — or the education function as a whole which derives so much stimulus from the tertiary sectors? At the risk of sounding sanctimonious, it is the preservation of liberal values against the natural and wholly comprehensible demands exerted on education from politicians acting in the name of the community.

These demands become strongest in times of growing unemployment, part of which may be related to government's own policies and part of which may be due to universal technological and social changes. But is the task of educators to resist these demands insofar as they contradict the values of liberalism — of free enquiry — which are the essence of true education and vital to the long-term well-being of the total community. Like conservationism or parity oil-pricing, this is a difficult argument to make because it involves foregoing immediate benefits for long-run gains based on current assumptions.

The crucial areas where vertical accountability can legitimately be resisted must be publicly defended in these value-oriented terms, in terms of the role of education as a basis for social progress through its obligation to question the basis of conventional wisdom and prevailing ideologies — in all fields of enquiry but particularly in the area relating to the activities of government itself. Hodgetts' lectures on accountability noted that there were special circumstances where a democratic system might depart from the notion of direct vertical accountability and instanced the publicly-owned mass communications media and CBC in particular. Whereas he generally favoured a tight parliamentary control over funding of wholly-controlled government instrumentalities, he saw that there was a special need of access to information free from political hindrance if the electorate was to be able to make a reasoned judgement about the performance of the government. For this reason, he preferred to insulate the broadcasting authorities through a public corporation.

He might well have quoted the Jeffersonian rubric which appears each day above the Editorial in the Brisbane *Courier Mail:* "Our liberty depends on the Freedom of the Press and that cannot be limited without being lost."

I would argue that the same proposition applies to academic freedom, that it will be lost if governments seek to inhibit institutions in what they teach. This is a point made in a spirited way by Charles Carter, former Vice-Chancellor of Lancaster University, when he pointed out that

> British universities, though largely dependent on Government money are to a degree insulated from Government control by the interposition of the University Grants Committee, a body largely composed of academics from the universities themselves. This device is widely regarded as ingenious and desirable, and particularly admired by our American friends, who perhaps see in it the academic equivalent of handing over the State control of gambling to the Mafia . . . So long as Government and the universities are at arm's length, the university system can preserve some of the variety and vitality which, in economic life, is attributed to free private enterprise. Mutual ignorance is a defence of freedom."[21]

Once the notion of being accountable extends to an accountability for teaching the "right" things, then one of the basic democratic freedoms of the whole society can be undermined. Within a single generation, the educated will be thinking what the government decides that they ought to

think because of its control over curriculum, imposition of social conformity on teachers, decisions to uphold political censorship of social science curriculum materials and the creation of a single Ministry of Post-Secondary Education as the ultimate device for vertical accountability.[22]

These proposals are all defended in the name of seeking an education system which is more responsive to community needs and in particular to demands for "relevance"; the ideal is a system which neatly tailors output to jobs, with courses aiming solely at vocational preparation.

Much earlier, I quoted Hyde's fear about the threat to "vocationalize" the education system. While not accepting that there is much evidence to support the idea that there is some dreaded conspiracy at work, this does not detract from the seriousness of the threat itself. This determination to make course content "relevant" to the needs of employers too easily slips into a determination to make courses palatable to the government and free from "un-vocational" critical elements which, by definition, are irrelevant to "the real world".

This is by no means a new phenomenon and has been pointed out as far back as the colonial origins of the larger metropolitan universities. Gardner's book, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, makes interesting reading. Discussing Sydney and Melbourne Universities, he pointed to the extent to which these new institutions were moulded to meet local needs and had to resist the financial pressures towards vocationalism. He indicated the dominant themes as the politics of regionalism, the "numbers game" used to conceal a lack of student demand, the liberating effect of accidental budgetary surpluses due to the gold rush and the contrast between the populist-vocational rhetoric and the elitist-liberal values which were pursued in practice. He could have been describing the 1960s and 1970s, particularly with respect to the CAE sector.[23]

Much has been written about the "evils" of vocationalism since the Martin Report.[24] Five years ago, I wrote a paper which confronted this problem in the teaching of public administration and argued in favour of including a core study of political science as a basis for informed social criticism. I asserted then that,

> "If vocationalism is to remain the dominant organisational ethic of tertiary institutions, than it is the crucial function of the study of social sciences — and political science in particular — to ensure that the balance is struck between the attainment of specific skills and the transmission of values related to the exercise of those skills . . . the study of political theory seems fundamental if educational objectives are to include the acquisition of that independence of mind which is basic to the operation of exercising democratic choice."[25]

We must resist the notion that education can ever be — or should ever be — value-free training for a specific vocation; the danger lies in the attempt by governments to impose their particular values on the curriculum and so defend the status quo in terms of vocational relevance.

This is not a proposition peculiar to tertiary institutions. An eminent and respected member of this College has very recently made the same

argument in relation to the current Queensland debate on education where vocationalism also rears its head: In a letter to the *Courier Mail*, Bill Bassett responded to Labor Party spokesmen who would "weed out" teachers and college lecturers whose values were suspect[26] and truncate before grade 10 the school careers of those who only needed a limited training to earn a living.[27] Bassett argued that,

> "the virtual identification of the role of school with vocational training is a serious error and it is important that our politicians who have such an important influence on the quality of our education system could have a more balanced view. The school has an important role in laying the foundations for effective vocational education, either on the job or in its technical and tertiary institutions, and in giving children an introduction to the world of work, but its main purpose is general education, with much wider objectives than specific job training. Among these wider objectives are an understanding of the structure and functioning of our society, and the cultivation of a sense of responsibility in participating in it in an informed and critical spirit. This is a major role that society should set for its schools, and it is unlikely that a free society can become a reality without well-educated citizens."[28]

I believe that all of us would do well to associate ourselves with these sentiments and actively seek to convert public opinion to our side rather than let the ambiguities of "vocationalism" lead education in totalitarian directions.

The article by Carter quoted above makes a similar point concerning accountability and autonomy in British universities:

> "The exercise of such freedom of decision (in relation to curriculum) is only tolerable if universities can be seen to be sensitive to the needs and ideas of the general community. The successful defence of university autonomy and freedom would be more assured if academics would only cultivate a greater humility and show a greater willingness to listen. A natural reaction to those who always sound as if they know best (and who probably believe it, too) is to question their right to do what they like; such attitudes stimulate the desire for control."[29]

On the home front, Senator Button has been making similar points with respect to the whole tertiary sector. While being sympathetic to the needs for academic freedom and liberal values (small-L of course), he stresses that

> "the teritary education system, and the people involved in it, have to think a little harder than they have in the past about these sorts of questions . . . there is (also) a degree of complacency in the way universities are managed. Universities object to being criticised for alleged financial excesses, but there is a fair obligation to set their own houses in order because every example of an alleged extravagance is detrimental to the notion of academic study in the community."[30]

As teachers of whatever level, we must accept that the citadel of learning is under attack. Funding everywhere is being cut and we need to be able to differentiate the luxuries from the necessities, to redraw the frontiers in order to defend more effectively those areas which ought to be proof from political direction. Vertical accountability is here to stay; once the political searchlight was pointed in our direction, it was inevitable that demands would be made to demonstrate value-for-taxpayers' money. In a sense the education industry has become a victim of its own success in attracting government funding on an unprecedented scale as demands for its products rose. Now, in a world-wide recession, the auditors have been called in. Some of us might even welcome this, even though there are costs to be borne. On balance the system is a lot healthier than it was 23 years ago when I first entered it, but it is politically naive to expect that the expansion since then could continue forever without someone, sometime, calling the educators to account.

The politicians need to be confronted with a measured response which indicates a willingness to meet the demands of taxpayers for efficiency and effectiveness in the use of their funds. Educators must be willing to communicate directly with the public, through the media, through contact with relevant interest groups and contact with the politicians themselves. They must be ready to get out and "Mix it" and apply their undoubted enthusiasm and intelligence to this major activity. Merely bitching about "accountability" as a major evil suddenly sprung upon us without warning will not win us any friends outside the already converted — and we need friends, lots of them, among parents, voters and opinion-leaders.[31] Accountability is a central theme in the ideology of competitive party democracy; if we subscribe to that ideology and the liberal values which it ought to enshrine, then we shouldn't knock accountability just because it hurts. It's meant to hurt.

Footnotes

1. Roger Scott, "Teacher Education and Public Accountability — Is the Customer Always Right?" *Phoenix — The Journal of the Queensland Association of Teacher Educators*, Vol. 2, No. 1, May 1979. Reprinted in *Alumni*, University of Queensland, November 1979.
2. Roger Scott, "Towards a Professional Public Service" in R. Smith and P. Weller, *Public Service Enquiries in Australia*, University of Queensland Press: 1978 "Government Service as a Profession — A Keynote Address" in J. Forrest (ed.), *Government Service as a Profession*, R.I.P.A. Queensland Regional Group, 1978; "Themes in Public Service Reform: Is Queensland Beyond Criticism?" *The Professional Officer*, Brisbane, September 1979.
3. See Ann Gowers and Roger Scott, *Fundamentals and Fundamentalists: Politics and Education in Queensland*, APSA Monograph No. 22, Flinders University, 1979; Ann and Roger Scott, *Reform and Reaction in the Deep North: The Education Policy Process in Queensland*, Melbourne University Press, 1980.
4. Roger Scott and Frank Morgan, "Participatory Impotence — Local Community Involvement in A.C.T. Schools", *ACEA Bulletin*, 9, 1976; reprinted in Mulford et al, *A.C.T. Papers on Education*, Canberra College of Advanced Education, 1976.
5. This rather odd-looking term is used to distinguish the students of public administration from the practitioners who might reasonably be termed "public administrators". The word "administrationist" was coined by Professor Dwight Waldo. See, for example, his chapter, "Education for Public Administration in the Seventies", in R. Mosher (ed.). *American Public Administration — Past, Present and Future*, University of Alabama Press, 1975.

6. N. A. Nilsson, "Accountability: Philosophy and Practice", in P. Sheldrake and R. Linke, *Accountability in Higher Education*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1979, p. 142.

7. Peter Samuels, "Colleges and Universities", *Monday Conference*, 3 October 1977. Peter Jones, Minister of Education, Western Australia, reported in *West Australian*, Perth, 13 October 1977.

8. Roger Scott, *Education and Public Accountability*, University of Queensland Press, 1979. Reprinted in *New Journal of Advanced Education*, Vol. 7, No. 5, August 1978.

9. M. Newton, "The Failure of Education", *Penthouse*, March 1980, pp. 44-52.

10. David Hurst, "Australia's Worst Colleges", *Penthouse*, March 1980, pp. 138-144.

11. Sheldrake and Linke, *op. cit.* This section is based on my forthcoming review in *Australian Journal of Public Administration*.

12. G. S. Harman and R.St.C. Johnson, *Academic Accountability: Courses and Programs*, in Sheldrake and Linke, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

13. J. Hyde, "The Structure of Higher Education" in Sheldrake and Linke, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

14. P. Chippendale, "Accountability at the Federal Level", in Sheldrake and Linke, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

15. G. A. Ramsey and G. Howlett, "Institutional Structures and Internal Accountability", in Sheldrake and Linke, *op. cit.*

16. G. Burke and P. A. McKenzie, "Academic Accountability — Resources", in Sheldrake and Linke, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

17. Nilsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143.

18. J. E. Hodgetts, "Financial Control and Accountability in Government", Joint Seminar of the Australian Society of Accountants and the Royal Institute of Public Administration, University of Queensland, 28 February 1980.

19. For details of the diagnosis and recommendations of the review panels, see Alby Jones, Roger Scott and Allan Skertchly. *Report of an Organisational Review Committee*, Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, 1978.

20. Scott and Morgan, *op. cit.*

21. Charles Carter, "The British Universities and the State: A Comment", *Higher Education*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1980, p. 1.

22. See in particular the Sixth Interim Report of the Select Committee on Education in Queensland, entitled Post-Secondary Education, tabled on 4 October 1979.

    It is important for the argument about accountability not to be diverted into the by-way of claims that reforms will lead to increased efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of services. As Peter Wilenski has clearly demonstrated in a recent article based in parts on personal experience,

    > "the process of reform, apart from the stress on efficiency, is usually explained in value-neutral terms. The program of the enquiry, it is claimed, will result in the job being done better or more quickly or more cheaply. However, if one looks more closely at the reasons for the establishment of such programs and enquiries, it is clear that underlying the urge to change the administration, there is a dissatisfaction not so much with the way in which decisions are carried out, as with the decisions themselves. *The "hidden agenda" of most reforms is to ensure that different decisions are taken and different outcomes in the community result* . . . . (Proposed administrative changes) result in different decisions being taken about the allocation of public resources. They result in shifts of power within the bureaucracy and in the community at large — in short the reallocation of public resources and benefits . . . *many of the really important reforms of administration are basically political in character and this political aspect is often hidden because the political nature of administration is hidden.*"

    P. Wilenski, "Political Problems of Administrative Responsibility and Reform", *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 4, December 1979, p. 347. (emphasis added)

23. W. Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 1975.

24. See in particular Jean Fly, *Reality and Rhetoric: An Alternative History of Australian Education*, Alternative Publish Co-operative Limited, 1978 and Robert Birrell, "Neo-Capitalism in Australia: The Case of the Colleges of Advanced Education", in Don Edgar, *Social Change in Australia*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1974.

    Partridge made the perceptive prediction back in 1963 that changes in the level of government involvement in the tertiary sector would lead inevitably to bureaucratic pressures for conformity and greater attention to an outside body's conception of "the public interest". (P. H. Partridge, "Australian Universities — Some Trends and Problems", *Australian University*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1963). He could scarcely have predicted that he would play such an active role in assisting in this process while stoutly defending the universities' interests.

    Carter was also conscious of this pressure for interference and offered the following counsel:

    > "To get the best in this delicate situation, the universities will need considerable political adroitness, and a good judgement of when to stand firm in defence of freedom and when to bend to public pressure. When concessions are needed, they should be originated and planned in the universities themselves, not forced on them by outside judgements." (Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 5)

25. Roger Scott, "Vocationalism and the Teaching of Politics in CAE's", in G. Harman and R. Scott (eds), *Teaching Politics in Colleges of Advanced Education*, Australian National University Press, 1975, p. 145.

26. "Weed Out Unfit Tutors: Casey", headline, *Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, 19 March 1980.

27. Report of a speech by Mr Wright, ALP, Rockhampton, *Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, 21 March 1980.

28. "Education: Job Training or Preparing for Life?", Letter to the Editor from Professor G. W. Bassett, *Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, 26 March 1980.

29. Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

30. J. Button, *The Australian*, 12 March 1980.

31. It's not only the teachers who need friends; consider the problem of our graduates from schools, CAE's and universities who have accepted the liberal ethic which many of us would regard as the essence of education and find themselves unemployed through no fault of their own. A recent University of Queensland survey reported that

    > "a number of respondents found themselves wondering if education was a waste of time, particularly when faced with community attitudes which suggested that their qualifications were more a liability than an asset. Their investment had been such that they felt the need to keep convincing themselves that their education had not been wasted. One graduate commented that his long-held belief that education is *not* about mere 'job training' was severely tested when it was confronted with the hard reality of being unemployed. He went on to say that the university should make a more positive effort to convince both the public and the employers of the intrinsic value of education." (University of Queensland Counselling Services: *A Report on a Survey of the Destination of 1978-79 University of Queensland Graduates*, Publication No. 13, November 1979, p. 35).

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE SCHOOL SYSTEM: A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION OF ISSUES

M. T. HEWITSON

This paper addresses the social accountability of State-wide Departmental school systems. The ideas presented may or may not apply to non-governmental schools, but no consideration is given in this paper to social accountability in respect of the "private sector" of schooling.

Social accountability is treated as if it were distinct from financial accountability, though, of course, in practice cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness questions cannot be ignored. In this paper, however, the focus is on the problems surrounding the curriculum aims, objectives, content and attainments of the school system.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, accountability may be defined as "responsibility for something to someone". For example, persons who are held accountable must answer for their conduct and performance of duties to some other person or persons. The term, social accountability, is taken to mean that the other persons to whom the school system is responsible and to whom it must answer for its performance ultimately comprise society at large.

This is not to say that those who are responsible for various aspects of the school system at different levels within it are not accountable for their performance to others working within the system. For the school system as a whole, however, there appears to be almost no theory base or operational structure by means of which social accountability in the general sense suggested above is to be achieved.

There is a sharp contrast in this respect between the school system and, say, the political, economic and legal systems of our society. Thus politicians answers for their performance directly to the electorate; producers are accountable to the consuming public through the workings of the competitive market system; and we are all answerable to the law. Despite imperfections in our voting system, in our market system for the production and distribution of goods and services, and in our system of law and justice, the mechanisms by which society holds politicians producers or citizens responsible for their performance are both theoretically grounded and operationally visible.

The concept of accountability thus implies the following four practical dimensions:

1. Definition of *what* constitutes the area of responsibility to be accounted for;
2. Definition of *who* bears the responsibility;
3. Definition of *to whom* the bearer of responsibility is accountable; and

4. Definition of *how* the account is to be rendered and met, i.e. the procedures and structures necessary to translate responsibility into accountability.

It is the purpose of this paper to explore some of the problems associated with holding the school system more effectively accountable to society, and hence more responsive to society's wishes. The initial position is taken that society pays the piper, is thereby entitled to call the tune and, in terms of accountability, to require a satisfactory-or-better rendition of it. Subsequent sections of the paper however, expose the difficulties of defining the who, to whom, for what and how dimensions of accountability (alluded to above) when it comes to the aims, objectives, content, and attainments of the school system.

The concluding section of the paper then examines a number of different proposals related to social accountability issues. The extent to which each proposal appears likely to overcome problems of social accountability as far as schooling is concerned is briefly examined, again from the viewpoint of the four practical dimensions of the concept.

The Extent of School System Accountability

Few people would dispute the claim that the school system cannot reasonably be held accountable for the full expression of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor performance of school students. That is, there is general consensus that the abilities and aptitudes of the students, the media, family and peer influence, the church, their leisure pursuits, etc. affect student's knowledge and thinking powers, their interests, attitudes and values, and their physical development. Nevertheless, a very large part of the total responsibility for student performance is attributed by society to the school system. For example, the Hughes (1968) and Western Australian (1969) Reports note that the schools' share of responsibility in preparing future citizens is seen by society as greater than that of all other institutions combined. It would also appear that, during the last decade, further responsibility has been apportioned to the school system as society attempts to cope with the exigencies of the current knowledge, technological, communication, occupational, demographic and moral revolutions.

Rapid social changes have exerted strong pressures on the school system, not only through their effects on the composition of the school population, the nature of the students in the schools and the composition and nature of staff who administer and teach them, but also through their direct impact on the aims and objectives of the system, the content and methods by which aims and objectives are to be realised, and the actual levels of performance of school students.

One way or another, it seems that society wishes to hold those who run the school system more clearly accountable than heretofore for their apportioned share of responsibility regarding each of the above aspects — aims and objectives, content and method, and student attainments. The assumption is that society has in view certain aims and objectives which are the proper business of schools and has established the school system for their attainment.

It may be that the extent to which the aims and objectives of schooling are perceived to be *not* attained determines the strength of the demand for greater social accountability. Figure 1 depicts the position in which the size of the gap between aims and attainments represents the level of demand for social accountability.

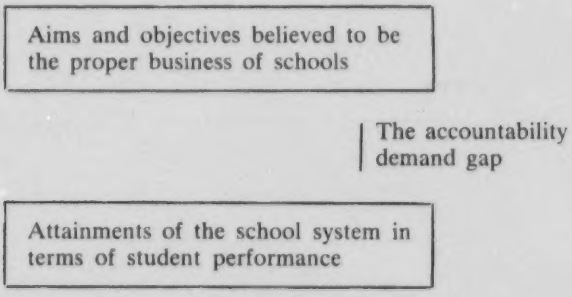
Aims and objectives believed to be the proper business of schools
The accountability demand gap
Attainments of the school system in terms of student performance

Figure 1 — The Accountability Demand Gap

Figure 1, though simplistic in its formulation, provides a useful point of departure for examining some of the complex issues involved in holding the school system more definitively socially accountable than appears to be the case at present. The following section of the paper addresses these issues.

Fundamental Issues

1. *School System Aims and Social Accountability*

The first issue suggested by Figure 1 concerns the aims and objectives believed to be the proper business of the schools. A major obstacle here is that individuals and groups within society are not agreed on school system aims except at the most general level. Thus politicians committed to a range of ideological perspectives, school system managers, administrators and teachers, parents and students, potential employers and the community at large may all agree that the schools should aim to promote the intellectual, social, emotional, moral and ethical growth of students, as well as develop psychomotor skills; or, at the very least, all may agree that schools should not aim to stultify student growth in these respects.

In a social democracy such as Australia, however, and under conditions of value pluralism now characteristic of Australian society, controversy and conflict accompany all attempts to translate board statements of aims into more specific, practicable objectives. This is so far two interrelated reasons:

1. Determining the content (and method) through which the aims are to be achieved involves individual value choices; and
2. Determining the emphasis to be given to the various student growth areas involves individual value priorities.

With regard to 1. above, it is perhaps sufficient to give a few examples illustrating lack of consensus at the classroom objectives level. The continuing saga of sex education in the Queensland school system is a case in point. Is sex education to be included in the school curriculum: What is to be the

content? How is it to be taught? Conflicting answers are given to such questions by different individuals and groups, depending on the respondents' beliefs about the aims and objectives of schooling. Similarly, individual value stances reveal lack of agreement within society over a range of curriculum options, such as religious education, driver education, school-level courses in politics, psychology and sociology, death education, and so on.

In terms of the four practical dimensions of accountability, then the first question is who is to be held accountable for final decisions regarding the aims and objectives of the school system: society at large through its politicians or successful pressure groups within society, or curriculum developers, or top-level system managers, or key system and school administrators, or the teachers themselves, who interpret and implement courses of study? Even if areas of responsibility were fully clarified, to whom would those held responsible be accountable, and what procedures and mechanisms would be needed to enable accounts to be rendered and met by the appropriate persons? In short, if the principle is accepted that people should not be held accountable for matters over which they have no control, where does the accountability buck start and stop with respect to the aims, objectives and content of the school curriculum?

It is the contention of this paper that these fundamental issues have not yet been resolved and that, until they are, the concept of social accountability as applied to the school system will remain vague and indeterminate, lacking both conceptual base and operational practicality.

Note, however, that the accountability picture is clearer with reference to teaching method. This is not to deny the existence of major differences of belief and opinion dividing society, and the teaching profession itself, about the most appropriate theories of learning and the most effective methods of instruction. Such differences, however, are often contingent upon differing beliefs about the aims and objectives of schooling: contrast, for example, child-centred and subject-centred approaches to teaching. But what makes the accountability picture clearer is that both school administrators and teachers have a much greater degree of control over instructional methods. Thus the area of responsibility and the bearers of responsibility can be pinpointed more certainly, and mechanisms exist within the umbrella of the Department of Education whereby those responsible for the teaching method can be brought to account.

A second reason for conflict over the operationalization of broad statements of school aims is lack of societal consensus on value priorities. Priorities must be allocated among the various student growth possibilities since constraints of available time and other resources preclude all students from attaining their full potential in all growth areas during their schooling. The reality is that decisions have to be made concerning the resources to be devoted, say, to traditional academic subjects at the expense of, say, the fine arts, or of social education or physical education, and so on. The decisions that are made reflect the value priorities which the decision-makers finally accept regarding the aims and objectives of the school system.

Conflicting value priorities can be presented in the form of a series of continua, as in Figure 2, which reflects examples of extreme views on the role of the school system.

The School System may be seen as:—

(1) A selection instrument for the future academic elite	⟷	An agency to promote growth to personal autonomy
(2) A formal preparation for entry into the social order — transmitting the status quo	⟷	A reflection of the changing social order — an instrument for achieving societal change
(3) Discipline-focussed, emphasizing "academic excellence"	⟷	Child-centred, emphasizing and "open climate"

Figure 2: Conflicting Views on the Role of the School System

It can readily be seen that the examples on the left-hand side of Figure 2 tend to reflect traditionalist, conservative beliefs about the primary role of the school system, while those on the right reflect progressive, humanistic beliefs about the primary role of the schools. The following points should be noted:

1. The views which people have on the role of the school system are mainly matters of belief or faith rather than empirically or logically established fact.
2. These views reflect people's ideals and values in a broader perspective — they are logically related to the kind of society which they envisage (and which, they would argue, should be envisaged by others).
3. People's view about the nature of society — what society is, can be or should be like — shape their opinions on what constitute the most appropriate relationships between the school system and other societal institutions, such as the family, the economy, religion, the polity leisure, etc.
4. Both the theory base and the operational structures which might be devised to make the school system more effectively accountable to society (or groups within it) will be contingent upon particular beliefs about the role of the school system. For example, the theory base and accountability structures evolved by those who believe that schools should primarily equip students with marketable job skills would differ significantly from the theory and structures proposed by those who believe that schools should be primarily concerned with the liberal education of the students.

According to this line of argument, therefore, the emphasis which individuals or groups would give to the various student growth areas simply reflects what they believe to be the proper business of the schools, in terms of aims, objectives and content. The fundamental issues remain unchanged

and are ultimately concerned with defining who is to be held responsible for what, to whom, and by implementing what procedures and mechanisms. The complexity of these issues in a relatively free and pluralist society may explain in large part why social accountability structures have not yet been successfully mounted either in this country or Britain or North America, a point which is taken up again in the concluding section of the paper.

2. *School System Attainments and Social Accountability*

Turning now to the second element involved in the accountability demand gap (Figure 1), the attainments of the school system, and more specifically, levels of student performance, are the subject of frequent and heavy public criticism.

It needs to be reiterated at the outset that the dominating influence on judgments which people make on student performance is a reflection of their beliefs about what schools should do and the directions schooling should take. These beliefs are translated into needs-referenced standards (Hewitson, 1976) which become the criteria against which the actual attainments of students are assessed. For example, if one believes that the primary role of schools is to equip students with job skills, one judges attainments with that value priority in mind; at the same time, one tends to disregard the fact that the schools may be doing excellent work in developing, say, the leisure interests of students or harmonious multicultural attitudes. Whether attainments are measured by teacher assessment or public examination, by norm-referenced grading procedures or against criterion-referenced standards, people's views on what constitutes the proper business of schools permeate their judgements on school system attainments.

The position may be illustrated by reference to the survey on the education system commissioned by *The Australian* and reported in the issue of Wednesday, December 26, 1979. The question asked of 1216 respondents in five mainland capitals (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth) was: Are you satisfied with the present Australian education system? A clear majority of respondents answered no, irrespective of occupation and income factors, geographic location, future voting intentions, sex, marital status and age group. The editorial headline read: "Money can't buy the education we need".

The first point to be noted is that, given conflicting beliefs about the primary aims of the education system, high levels of dissatisfaction are to be expected. The schools simply cannot be everything to everyone.

Secondly, dissatisfaction may be expressed by some respondents because too low a priority is thought to be given to a valued aspect of schooling, such as the fine arts, and by other respondents because in their opinion, too much emphasis is already placed on that same aspect of schooling. The system is in a cleft stick: whatever action is taken, higher levels of societal satisfaction cannot be guaranteed. (Note, that, in general, the *Australian* survey findings are of no practical benefit since those concerned with raising levels of satisfaction with the school system are given no lead at all as to what action they might take).

Thirdly, society appears to be willing to increase the school system's share of responsibility for the total education of the student population without due appreciation of the overall burden being laid on the system and consequent administrator and teacher preparation needs and resource needs generally.

Fourthly, promises tend to be made on behalf of the educational system which are beyond the capacity of the system to fulfil. As Faure et al. (1972) point out, the pressure on governments to make abundant allowance for parents aspirations regarding their children's schooling leads to the educational system operating in advance of real employment outlets. This process is operative here and now at tertiary level with teacher education programs, for example, and at school level, with increasing emphasis on job skill courses and work experience programs — the total number of employment outlets is not affected by such courses.

Finally, educators themselves may be guilty of leading people to believe that theory-based changes in some aspects or other of the existing school system will bring about significantly better attainments in terms of student performance. Certain sections of society, it appears, have not perceived the fulfilment of these expectations and some disillusionment with educational innovations has resulted.

Even so, the levels of dissatisfaction reported in *The Australian* are disturbing. In so far as they apply to primary and secondary schools, they also give a different impression from that given by the findings of the surveys initiated by the Australian College of Education. In Queensland, Botsman & Browne (1978) found that about 80% of 940 respondents rated the primary and secondary schools which they knew best as satisfactory, good or excellent. In South Australia (Dunne, 1978), the comparable figure approaches the 90% mark. Note, of course, that people who rate a school as satisfactory, good or excellent may also be dissatisfied with certain aspects of the school system.

The point being made here, however, is that the *Australian's* editorial on "Money can't buy the education we need" misses the fundamental issue, namely, a clear definition of "the education we need". If it were possible to define that, the next question would be whether money can or cannot buy it.

To summarise the argument so far, when people pass judgment on the attainments of the school system, they cannot escape their beliefs about what the schools should be doing in terms of aims, objectives and content. Thus, at this level of analysis, the same problems arise when it comes to the social accountability of the school system: in respect of attainments, who is to be held accountable for what area of responsibility, to which sections of society, and through what procedures and structures?

School system attainments, however, may be approached at a different level of analysis. The suggestion was made earlier (Figure 1) that the demand for social accountability is likely to rise as the gap between people's values and the school system grows wider. To what extent, however, is it reasonable to hold school administrators and teachers accountable for student performance under the following conditions:

(a) if there can be no guarantee that a student will necessarily learn a lesson, however thorough the instruction (Raybin, 1979);

(b) if there is no support for the school program in the home;

(c) if the TV curriculum proves more attractive than the school curriculum;

(d) if pulp literature, transistor radios and slot-machine amusement centres truly reflect a large slice of society's materialistic and hedonistic approach to living;

(e) if the dole queue appears the likely outcome of schooling;

(f) if value pluralism or value relativity is interpreted by society to justify moral licence;

(g) if resources are lacking to enable schools to compete effectively with any or all of the above?

It is clear that the accountability demand gap may increase because of unrealism attaching to the aims, objectives and total content of the school curriculum and no further elucidation of this point seems necessary. Alternatively, the gap may increase because of incompetence on the part of those working in the school system. In this respect, it seems incontrovertible that accountability should be matched with responsibility. If so, it seems logical that school administrators and teachers should be held accountable strictly in terms of their professional competence, i.e., in terms of the quality of the services which they render in their given context. Hence any structures devised to enable them to be held accountable would of necessity need to include provision for expert judgment on their own performance in the schools rather than on the performance of their students. And this important conclusion may prove somewhat unpalatable to those who criticise the attainments of the school system as a platform for demanding more effective social accountability processes.

In summary of the discussion on school system attainment, therefore, at one level of analysis it is the valued aims, objectives and content of schooling that are fundamentally at issue; and at another level of analysis, the fundamental issue concerns the competent provision of professional services. Actual levels of student performance provide the data on the basis of which judgments about school system attainments may be made, but they are necessarily to be interpreted in the light of criteria associated with both individual value stances and the professional competence of the school staff. As noted earlier, the value stance issue is yet to be resolved in terms of the four practical dimensions of accountability. The professional competence issue seems more amenable to resolution: in general terms, the school staff is responsible for the provision of competent professional services: they may be held accountable by experts in the field, who would need to observe directly or gather valid reports on school staff performance. Co-operative school evaluation embodies this principle to some extent, but may need to go further in terms of professional expertise from outside the school itself if lay scepticism is to be overcome.

The following section briefly examines a number of alternative or complementary proposals related to increasing the social accountability of

the school system. It becomes evident that, until the fundamental issues and principles discussed above are addressed, more effective social accountability remains a rather remote possibility.

Proposals related to Social Accountability Issues

In this section, each of the proposals discussed might be thought likely to increase the social accountability of the school system. The starting point in every case is not who is to be responsible for what, as in the previous section, but how social accountability can be more effectively implemented, i.e. the procedures and structures related to social accountability.

The first proposal to be discussed is a form of the historical "payment by results" approach to making teachers directly accountable for their students' performance. The relatively recent, if not widely adopted, scheme is known as "performance contracting". Briefly, a school or school system contracts with an outside agency to bring students up to specified performance standards in specified content areas.

It seems, however, that the early optimism surrounding performance contracting has proved unfounded (see Page, 1972, for example). Furthermore, the content areas in most contracts have been limited to basic skills such as reading and mathematics. It is made absolutely clear in the contract, nevertheless, that the contractor is responsible to the contracting schools for obtaining specified student outcomes. However, when student attainments are conceived of over the whole range of potential growth areas, and taking into account widely differing abilities and aptitudes, performance contracting appears to lack feasibility at the present time.

Another proposal to make schools more accountable to parents and, through them, to society generally, is referred to as the Voucher System. The theory is that educational vouchers (coupons) should be issued to parents who would use them in exchange for educational services provided by the approved cooperating school of the parents choice. In essence, the voucher system attempts to apply competitive market theory to the school system: parents and students constitute the demand forces through the expenditure of vouchers, and the schools respond by either supplying the kinds of education demanded or going out of business. The economic power thus given to parents would result in schools being more directly accountable for their performance and more responsive to parental wishes.

Limitations of space and time preclude a full discussion of the voucher system here — its ideological and theoretical underpinnings and the practical difficulties surrounding its implementation. One form of the system has been demonstrated in practice over a four year period (1972-1976) in Alum Rock School District, California. In summary, although higher levels of parental satisfaction with the schools were reported and a wider range of options emerged, according to Hind (1978), the experiment "in no way resulted in parents being more powerful and hence influencing the allocation of resources". In fact, the decision-making position of the professionals (the teachers) was strengthened, not weakened, during the course of the experiment.

Another form of the funding of schooling by means of a voucher system is the "Initiative for Family Choice' plan conceived by John Coons (1979). The plan involves the replacement of existing public and private schools in California by independent public schools (IPS) and family choice schools (FCS), and voucher expenditures by parents.

A referendum on the introduction of the plan through California over a minimum period of six years is reported to be "likely for 1980".

In terms of the four practical dimensions of accountability, voucher system theory resolves the fundamental issue of gaining consensus on the aims, objectives and content of schooling by means of the voucher expenditures of parents. It does not, however, resolve issues associated with levels of student attainment — the other side of accountability demand gap — beyond the point of competent provision of education services by the staff of the schools. In practice, moreover, it is logical to expect voucher schemes to be accompanied by the imperfections of the competitive market system (imperfect knowledge on the part of consumers, lack of mobility of capital and labour resources, etc.) as well as by its anticipated advantages.

In Australia, the Schools Commission has been keeping voucher-style financing of schooling under review. It appears, however, that this method of increasing the social accountability of the school system is unlikely to be implemented here in the near future.

A third way in which it may seem that schools would be held accountable more effectively to society is by means of greater local community involvement in the decision-making process. This topic again warrants more time than can be given to it here, but a number of cautionary points need to be made, even if only to counter-balance the spirit over over-optimism of the advocates of increased community participation in school affairs.

Consider the following general comments:—

1. Local lay participation (through school boards, 1870-1902), and since then, through Local Education Authority appointments to Schools Committees) has been a feature of school management in England for over 100 years. Local rather than centralized administration at the level of individual school management has not proved effective in resolving issues surrounding the aims, objectives, and content of schooling, witness the continuing battle in Britain between "traditionalists" and "progressives". In England, the head of the school makes the decisions that count, not the voice of the local community. Indeed, the research of Lynch and Pimlott (Taylor, 1976) indicates that "the majority of parents have little desire to interfere with the way schools are at present organized and controlled." Many wanted more information, consultation and involvement in their child's education, but no more than a tiny minority wanted involvement in the management and government of schools.
2. Local lay participation through school boards has also been a central feature of North American schooling for more than a century. It has not resulted in a reduction in the accountability demand gap. In fact, the demand for greater accountability of the school system appears to be much more strident in the U.S. than it is in this country.

3. School boards may become reactionary in orientation, ineffective in school-community relationships, subject to undue influence by vested interests or pressure groups, at odds with professional educators, and deficient in terms of educational foresight. The membership is most likely to be from elitist groups and not representative of the total community.
4. School boards introduce another layer of management in the overall administrative structure of the school system, which may prove difficult to justify. Their real clout depends on their control of the budget: if only a small fraction of the budget is available for discretionary spending by school boards, their effectiveness is likely to be minimal. Note in passing that the movement in both Britain and North America is to reduce the number of local school system management authorities (LEA's and School Districts, respectively) by a process of amalgamation and enlargement. Australia appears to be headed in the opposite direction.
5. That there are significant and important relationships between local community involvement in decision-making and how hard school staff work and/or how well students perform has yet to be demonstrated. On the face of it, there are few grounds for believing that these relationships exist.

It is for reasons such as these that it seems advisable, in terms of increasing the social accountability of the school system, to view the faith of those advocating greater local community control over schooling with a healthy scepticism. In addition, although some degree of local consensus on aims, objectives and content may be reached, state-wide and national interests may also need to be taken into account. Furthermore, school staffs may be held accountable for their implementation of locally-determined decisions, but not necessarily for the outcomes of those decisions in terms of student attainments.

Another way of approaching the accountability demand gap is under discussion in Australia at this time, namely, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). It will be recalled that the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) surveyed the literacy and numeracy skills of ten- and fourteen-year old children in Australian schools in 1975, and published the findings under the title *Australian Studies in School Performance* (Volumes I, II and III) in 1976-77. One present proposal is to monitor educational standards in the basics (literacy and numeracy, but oracy and essential learning about society could be added later) on a regular basis, thus providing a flow of empirical data to inform public debate on school system performance with respect to student attainments in the so-called "functional" (survival) skills.

Leaving aside the technical difficulties, it is important to recognize what a program of national assessment cannot achieve:

(1) It does not directly affect present or future educational standards.

(2) It does not directly measure outcomes of schooling per se.

(3) It does not assess the effectiveness of particular inputs into schooling.

(4) It does not establish either what ought to be done or how it ought to be done. (Value judgments remains the basis of these decisions).

Under these conditions, the findings of NAEP types of investigation are unrelated to issues surrounding the aims, objectives and content of schooling. Moreover, national assessment neither causes student performance standards to be high or low nor provides indicators of reasons or remedies. It simply provides information on trends in educational progress over time in the content areas tested. It is assumed that society has the right to such information, but this does not mean that the resources involved could not be used to better effect elsewhere. Clearly, however, the accountability demand gap may be affected either favourably or adversely by national monitoring of minimum levels of student attainment in "the basics".

Minimum competency testing is itself a topic of scholarly debate at present. In the recently released report, *Review of School-Based Assessment in Queensland Secondary Schools* (ROSBA, 1978) assessment of student performance in terms of specified competency levels has been recommended to replace assessment in terms of levels of achievement in relation to the total student population's performance. At the time of writing, it is difficult to predict whether the impact of the proposed change in the grading system in Queensland schools would be more cosmetic than fundamental, more incremental than substantial. For example, the standard set for the highest level of competence would presumably lie within the actual achievement potential of a percentage of the best students. However the Reports recommendations are ultimately translated into practice, the fact remains that competency testing per se does not cause student performance to be high or low: causes and remedies are to be sought elsewhere. Thus competency testing is only tenuously related to issues surrounding social accountability and the school system: aims, objectives and content problems are not thereby resolved, and the establishment of prescribed levels of competence would itself appear to be a very difficult task.

Turning now specifically to the teacher sector of the school system, a number of recent trends may be associated with making the schools more effectively accountable to society. For example, school-based curriculum development may be viewed as part of the decentralization process whereby more control over curriculum decisions rests with individual schools. Theoretically, then, the schools, being more clearly responsible for their curriculum, are also more definitively accountable for it. The practical difficulties remain however, with respect to the questions: Accountable to whom, specifically? For their own or for their students' performance? By what mechanisms are accountability procedures to be implemented?

Again, competency-based teacher education (CBTE) programs may be considered an obvious way to improve the levels of achievement of students in the schools. But research has yet to show that competency-based programs produce teachers who are more effective in the classroom in terms of their own or their students' performance. (See Levis et al., 1979, for example). Thus the effects of CBTE on the accountability demand gap may well be nil.

Yet another suggestion aimed at making teachers more accountable for their classroom teaching involves renewable rather than permanent registration. Tenured positions would disappear — teachers would be registered to teach for say, five years, at the end of which period, registration for professional practice would have to be renewed. The conditions for renewal of registration would be such that minimum levels of teaching competence would be updated to guarantee continued satisfactory performance. Florida's 1978 law, for example, requires teachers to gain a minimum number of inservice points for credits in college courses during the five-year validity period of the teaching certificate if renewal of certification is to be granted (Robinson and Mosrie, 1979). Clearly, teachers are being held accountable for maintaining their professional competence levels, but the fundamental issues associated with the social accountability of the school system are not addressed in any way by the question of tenure.

To conclude this brief review of proposals related to social accountability issues, it may be stated that some appear to lack feasibility at the present time while others do not, in fact, come to grips with the fundamental issues involved. The foregoing analysis strongly indicates, first, that it is gaining consensus on the aims, objectives and content of schooling that lies at the heart of the problem; and, second, that levels of student performance are more a red herring than a focal issue.

Perhaps the most promising area to explore further is the "Core curriculum plus electives" approach to resolving aims, objectives and content problems. For example, it may be possible to obtain wide-spread agreement on a core of essential knowledge and functional skills as constituting, in a minimal way, the proper business of the schools. A core curriculum for each year of schooling could perhaps be defined in these terms.

Similarly, it may be possible to specify certain values which society would generally admit as worth inculcating in all students during their schooling. Crick (1975) defines such values as "procedural". They include freedom, toleration, fairness, respect for truth and respect for reasoning. They are to be seen as preconditions for any genuine education and, as such, should be espoused by all students.

In contrast, "substantive" values attach to particular ideologies, views of the world, and beliefs about the purposes of schooling. It is differences in substantive-value stances which are likely to generate the high levels of conflict referred to earlier over the aims, objectives and content of the school curriculum.

It would be desirable for different value stances to be understood, but not necessary for them to be espoused.

As a modest starting point, therefore, it would seem worthwhile that all statements of school aims and (the intermediate aims and) the more specific objectives derived from them be presented with the distinction between procedural and substantive values clearly drawn. In general terms, the issues explored in this paper suggest that the theoretical and practical dimensions of increasing the social accountability of the school system have

so far proved too vast in scope and too complex in nature for satisfactory resolution. Perhaps devoting our efforts in the first instance to defining a core of functional content, skills and values may prove to be a more manageable task.

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A Performance Evaluated

The following story illustrates how performance is evaluated according to the individual's value-based, needs-referenced standards.

"A Music teacher had an extra ticket to a symphony concert, and he asked his friend, an efficiency expert, if he would like to go along. It so happened that the major work played was Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, and the music teacher found the performance to be of excellent standard and enjoyed it very much.

Imagine his surprise, then, when the next day he received a typewritten analysis of the concert sent to him by the efficiency expert. It reads as follows:

(1) It was noted that the orchestra contained six oboists who remained silent for long periods of time during the playing of the symphony. This is an obvious example of overstaffing and underuse of facilities. It is recommended that their number be reduced to one, and the peak loads carried by the oboists be distributed evenly throughout the symphony. One oboist could then easily carry the distributed workload.

(2) It was noted that the twelve violinists all played the same notes during the symphony. This is an obvious example of needless duplication of effort. It is recommended that the twelve violinists be reduced to one, and that modern technology be used to provide additional volume, if additional volume is indeed required.

(3) It was noted that some of the instruments used by the orchestra were over 200 years old. Even a nominal rate of depreciation would yield the conclusion that these instruments are obsolete and without value. They should be destroyed and replaced by modern instruments.

(4) It was noted that large sections of the symphony were first played by the strings and then replayed by the brass. This is an obvious example of needless repetition, and such parts should be removed from the symphony.

(5) It was noted that the symphony makes use of many quarter and half notes. This is an obvious example of unnecessary refinement. It is recommended that all such notes be rounded off to the nearest full note.

CONCLUSION

If these principles are followed, the two hour symphony can be played in twenty minutes, and by following these principles, Schubert could have finished his symphony."

The point of the story, of course, is that in education, as in music, different criteria (standards) generate differing interpretations of the available data, depending on one's basic value stance.

I regret that I cannot duly acknowledge the original authorship of such an excellent illustration of this point.

EXPLORING POLITICS IN EDUCATION: SOME BARRIERS AND SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

G. HARMAN

Introduction

A decade or so ago, when I first became involved in research in what has now come to be called the politics of education, by far the most serious obstacle in encouraging professional educators in this country to systematically explore and come to grips with the political aspects and dimensions of education was a deep-seated belief that politics and education belong to entirely separate domains. Education systems were regarded as being apolitical and it was thought not only that politics and education were unrelated and separate functions of society, but that this was the way it should be. These views were widely-shared traditional, community sentiments. Thus, in discussions or debates about education objectives and policies, political leaders, interest group spokesmen and members of the public, as well as teachers and education administrators, often made the bald assertion that 'education is outside politics' or that 'education should be taken out of politics altogether'. Of course, the reality was far removed from the rhetoric, and from the start public education in Australia has been deeply enmeshed in political life. Further, in particular education policy disputes, interested parties invariably used these catch-cries to advance their own causes. Still, such catch-cries came naturally to people's lips; their truth was seldom questioned, and they reflected long-entrenched values. These views about education and politics not only provided a barrier to professional understanding, but they handicapped research into the political functions and aspects of education. They also are still the cause of some confusion about terms such as 'politics of education' and 'politics in education'.

The origins of these views about education and politics being separate are by no means easy to chart. In part, they were probably a product of the bitter nineteenth century conflicts over church and state roles in education and, following these conflicts, of efforts by interests supporting public education to maintain the 'free, compulsory and secular' legislative settlements arrived at in each of the six colonies. In turn, the operation of the highly centralized public school systems which tended to insulate teachers and school administrators from most direct local political pressures and a common Australian view of politics as being something rather sordid and not really respectable tended to reinforce the notion of education being apolitical. In addition, ideas from overseas most likely provided additional support. Significantly in the United States, in Britain and in a number of other western societies similar ideas had developed, and in some cases somewhat earlier than in Australia.

In the United States, for example, the idea of educational institutions being apolitical was a particularly strongly held belief for a long period,

and it had a marked influence on the development of the pattern of school-level governance that continues to operate even today. The idea of education being outside politics was first advanced and propagated by school administrators and professional educators, who sought to protect public education from the corruption and unsavoury character of much of late nineteenth and early twentieth century urban politics. It was also taken up by leaders of the late nineteenth century reform movement directed against government corruption, boss-run urban political machines, and other various evils associated with local partisan politics. Both groups had good reason to try to protect the public schools; according to Thomas H. Eliot, whole school systems had been 'blighted by the intrusion of certain aspects of politics, especially in the use of patronage in appointments and contracts in apparent disregard to give children the best possible education'.[1] In addition, school administrators soon saw other advantages in making education non-political, particularly securing greater professional autonomy for themselves, and safeguarding the continuity of educational programs from the whims of politicians and fluctuating opinions of electors. The result was that schoolmen and reformers were able to have the schools singled out from the many public service institutions operated by local government for special treatment, and to build a whole set of myths, portraying education as a unique government function, one that must be 'taken out of politics' and safeguarded by educators who alone could protect the public interest. To non-Americans, it may be somewhat of a puzzle to understand how school administrators and reformers were able to secure this special treatment for the public schools, since in Australia at state level public education has been largely treated in a similar fashion to other comparable functions of government. According to two American political scientists, the explanation is to be found in the place that public education has occupied in American thinking. They comment:

> Education has been the means to realize the American Dream. Not only does the school provide the knowledge necessary for success, but also it teaches discipline, the value of hard work, and patriotism — all values intimately related to The Dream. Moreover, the public school provides these things in equal measures for all. It not only transmits the democratic creed, but also is a product of that creed . . . Educating America's youth was much too sacred a rite to risk its perversion through practices which reformers believed characterize the world of politics. In a sense, the educational product is politically neutral, independent of partisan considerations and superior to them . . . Thus . . . the task of public education could not afford to be subverted by the corruptive influence of politics.[2]

While the Australian view of education has been somewhat different, some of the same thinking about the need for education to be independent and non-partisan was clearly part of our mode of thinking about politics and education.

Today, however, the situation in Australia, as in the United States and Britain, is vastly different; the old notions of education being apolitical

have been largely forgotten, and the catch-cries about education being outside politics have been abandoned. This change has been brought about primarily by the increasing politicization of education; education policy has become much more a matter for public debate and political party competition, often differences on educational issues and appproaches are openly fought about in the public arena, while school teachers have gained for themselves the reputation of being one of the most militant of the white-collar and professional occupational groups. In addition, I like to think that a decade or more of substantial research by scholars in the politics of education has played some part in convincing practicing professionals and other scholars in education that education institutions and processes are highly political in character.

But whatever the causes of this change, the result today is widespread recognition among teachers, and educational administrators, and also often among members of the wider community, that political pressures and forces have a major effect on education policy and institutions, and that education is certainly not outside politics.

At the same time, although this old barrier to better understanding has gone, its removal has revealed the existence of other barriers — barriers which also tend to block or impede teachers and administrators coming to grips more fully with the political aspects and dimensions of education, and learning to cope more adequately with new political pressures and new political realities. In this paper, I propose to discuss four of these new barriers, and in doing so I will attempt to introduce some concepts and approaches which, I consider, have utility for anyone trying to make sense of the different forms that politics takes in education. The four barriers are the problem of meanings, the lack of perspective, doubts about systematic investigation, and a sense of professional powerlessness. They differ significantly one from the other, but curiously all-four often find voice in the same kind of expression. How often have you heard a teacher or an administrator complain that a particular education policy decision was 'political', or that some new development was simply the result of 'politics'? Invariably in such statements one detects a note of frustration or even cynicism, and generally the speaker does not go any further to elaborate; the assumption seems to be that to say that a decision is political, is a perfectly plain and unambiguous statement, and that either nothing further is worth saying, or can be said. This kind of statement will serve as a stepping-off point in my treatment of each of the four new barriers. Basically my argument is that statements like these are by no means necessarily clear and complete. Moreover, they often reflect problems with basic terminology, they frequently are a symptom of a lack of understanding about what politics in education is all about, they sometimes are an expression of doubt about whether systematic exploration of the world of politics is possible and desirable, and at times they are prompted by a sense of lack of power by professional educators.

But these new barriers too, can be overcome — by endeavouring to make our meanings clearer, by attempting to understand how political and educational processes and institutions in society are inter-related, by accepting that systematic exploration of political phenomena is possible

and that appropriate tools are available to undertake this task, and by recognising that professional educators are by no means excluded from all things political, and that in a period of increasing democratization of policy determination the role of professional expertise becomes even more critical.

In the discussion I will draw from research from the disciplines of political science and sociology, and from work by scholars in the area of the politics of education. The latter will include some results from a team project that I and various colleagues have been involved in over recent months. The project, funded by the Ford Foundation in the United States and the Education Research and Development Committee in Australia, has been concerned with exploring the education policy process at state level in Australia and the United States.[3]

The Problem of Meanings

When an administrator or a teacher says that a particular education policy decision was political, he or she may well consider that the meaning of this statement is perfectly clear, particularly if it is addressed to other professional educators. But this need not be the case and, in fact, statements like this often are made to convey many different meanings. The precise meaning intended on any occasion will depend on the speaker's view of what politics is all about, and on the particular context and the various participants involved; it may also depend on the particular audience.

What different meanings are intended by the statement that a particular decision was political? Sometimes the meaning intended is that the decision was taken on non-technical grounds. Frequently ministers, governments and official boards and committees make decisions on such grounds, and in doing so they often reject both professional wisdom and the advice of experts.

There may be many reasons for doing so: the advice of experts may be financially difficult or even impossible to follow, or it may be electorally dangerous; such advice may be opposed by strong interest groups; or such advice may be administratively difficult to implement, particularly in the short term. Sometimes the intended meaning is that the decision was made mainly or entirely in order to implement a stated policy of the political party in government; for example, one of the main reasons the Whitlam Government abolished tuition fees in 1974 was that this was stated ALP policy, and also a commitment made by the Party Leader in his policy speech during the 1972 general election campaign. Sometimes, by saying that a decision was political, the speaker means that the policy outcome was the result of bargaining and compromise. Our research on policy processes at state and territorial levels in Australia shows that generally major policy decisions are products of lengthy processes of consultation, both within departments and agencies and between formal actors and those interest groups that are regarded as having some kind of legitimate right to participate in policy-making. On other occasions, to say that a decision was political may mean that a minister or senior official made a particular decision in order to enhance his personal power or prestige, or that a policy outcome was the result of capitulation by the government to the demands

of a powerful pressure group. Or again, to say that a decision was political, may mean that it was made by a government in order to generate electoral support, or to out-manoeuvre the Opposition. Still further, it may mean that the decision resulted from complications arising from current federal-state relations, or that within a department or agency bureaucratic considerations were paramount. And to this list we could go on adding still other meanings which are sometimes intended when someone says that a decision was political.

That the simple statement that a policy decision was political can be used to convey so many different meanings is not really surprising, when we consider that the word 'politics' itself is used in many different senses in everyday speech. It is frequently employed when referring to political parties and their affairs.

Pressure group spokesmen, for example, often declare that their organisations are 'non political'; by this they mean that they are not directly connected with any political party, and not that they have no interest at all in public policy or the affairs of government. The word politics is also used to refer to the business of governing, and to governmental or legislative institutions such as parliament or cabinets. If someone says he is contemplating entering politics, he usually means that he is thinking about contesting an election to become a member of parliament. Then too, the term is sometimes used in talking about particular skills related to power and decision-making situations. To say that a person 'really knows how to play politics', can be meant as a real compliment. Further, the word politics sometimes is used more or less synonymously with the worst forms of political behaviour — with corruption, the misuse of power, and the seeking of objectives for solely selfish reasons.

Apart from these usages, social scientists use the term politics in specialist or technical senses and frequently define politics in much broader terms as being essentially about matters of public policy and governance, and concerned with all those processes in society where power, influence and authority are involved. Many of them, for example, would agree with the noted American political scientist, Robert A. Dahl, that politics arises wherever 'there are people living together in associations, whenever they are involved in conflicts, and whenever they are subject to some kind of power, rulership or authority'.[4]

There is no real solution to this problem of meanings, especially when key terms are used in many different popular and technical senses. But we can recognise that this problem exists and that it inhibits effective and precise communication. We can also endeavour to do our utmost to make our meanings clear, and to explain in what sense we are using key terms. If we do this, we will make substantial progress in overcoming my first barrier.

The Lack of Perspective

When an educator says that an education policy decision was political, and then fails to elaborate on this statement, he or she may be displaying a sense of frustration or even cynicism.

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But as well, I suspect that often this kind of behaviour also springs from a lack of understanding about the political world, and how politics and education are inter-related. Of course, this lack of perspective is not surprising, since the links between educational and political institutions and processes in all kinds of societies are complex and often subtle. Yet without some sense of this perspective a teacher or administrator will find it difficult to come to grips with the many faces of politics in education. Lack of perspective then constitutes our second barrier to more adequate understanding.

Different researchers involved in work in the area of the politics of education use different kinds of frameworks to map the linkages between politics and education. Here I propose to explain briefly one approach which I have found useful. I will use the term education to refer mainly but not exclusively to formal education at all levels and both in government and non-government institutions, while I will employ a broad conception of politics to include not only the business of government and matters relating to public policy and political parties but also all those social processes concerned with power, influence and authority. I see the main linkages between education and politics falling into four related clusters: (a) education as an area of public policy and governmental activity; (b) the internal politics of educational systems and institutions; (c) the influence of educational institutions and processes on political life and behaviour; and (d) the influence of political institutions and processes on education. We will discuss each in turn.

(a) *Education as an Area of Public Policy and Governmental Activity.*

In Australia education now clearly is a major area of public policy and government activity. On a number of measures undoubtedly it stands in a comparable position to policy areas such as defence, health, social security and trade.

In the first place, education is now a major financial and administrative responsibility for both state and federal governments. Since federation education has been regarded as a state government responsibility, and the various state administrators provide a wide range of education services in pre-schools, schools, colleges of advanced education, technical and further education colleges and universities. Education absorbs a large proportion of state budgets, and the administration of education has necessitated the development of not only ministerial departments of education, but in many cases of departments of technical and further education and agencies such as higher or advanced education boards, post-secondary education commissions and adult education boards. Within state cabinets, the education portfolio usually goes to a senior minister.

Despite the commonly held view that education is a power reserved for the states and the fact that the Commonwealth constitution makes no references at all to education, over the past three or four decades the Commonwealth Government has become involved also to a major degree in the funding and control of Australian education at all levels within the six states, as well as in federal territories. In the tertiary field, the commonwealth now has 'total' responsibility for the regular capital and recurrent

funding of all Australian universities and colleges of advanced education; in addition, it operates a major scheme of student allowances. As well, the Commonwealth provides substantial grants each year for schools, technical and further education and pre-schools. To administer its various education programs, it has established a separate department of education, a number of statutory authorities and various advisory committees.

Education is also an important area of public policy in that it attracts a great deal of attention in parliament and in the media. For many years education was a relatively non-controversial area, but for a decade or more it has become extremely prominent in public debate and often highly controversial. Strong pressure groups represent various education interests, and in a number of general election and by-election campaigns education has clearly been a major issue. Education is also one of the highly sensitive areas with regard to federal-state relations.

Education is an important area of public policy too because education itself is an important stake in politics. Almost everyone in Australian society cares about the quantity and quality of education and, especially, how it is distributed. Of course, people also care about the distribution of many other items of political goods. But education is probably of more vital importance to a great many people than most other political commodities. Further, its distribution to a large extent is in the hands of professionals. Like other stakes or political commodities there cannot be enough to satisfy everyone (for example, not enough top rated teachers or schools) so educators must make choices about who gets what of the resources available for education. Occasionally discussion about such choices becomes public and controversial, but more often it is settled by professionals privately away from public attention and knowledge.

Because education itself is an important stake distributed through political processes, it provides a number of potent political symbols. Many political actions or issues that are controversial or regarded as being of importance provide symbols that evoke emotions and condense within them basic political orientation and feelings. Thus approaches or procedures such as open education, progressive assessment, public external examinations, progressive education and ability streaming often become arenas for intense debate and controversy. They represent all that is good or bad in the world as it pertains to parent's aspirations for themselves and their children, and the terms themselves become rallying cries and symbols for quite complicated sets of values and orientations. But further, beneath the symbols often lie fundamental conflicts between different groups and ideologies about the control of what is taught and how is it taught. What is regarded as knowledge and the way it is transmitted are eminently political questions.

Then too, education is political in the sense that there is major governmental involvement in the operation of education institutions. As we have already noted, state governments have established and operate schools, colleges and universities. The universities and most of the colleges of advanced education are controlled directly by their own councils, but still they are responsible to a state minister and parliament and come clearly under government influence, especially with regard to particular matters.

The schools and technical and further education colleges are much more directly under government influence and are actually controlled and administered by particular government departments.

Apart from all this, as major employers, the various Australian governments provide a range of education services for their own employees and prospective employees.

For example, most departments run training and in-service programs, while at both federal and state levels there are a number of specialist government colleges, training personnel for employment in areas such as the armed services and policy.

In thinking about education as an area of public policy, systems theory has some utility as a conceptual tool.[5] The Australian political system can be thought of in one sense as comprising of a number of separate sub-political systems or domains, each concerned with a separate policy area, such as defence, health, foreign affairs, agriculture, education and so on. Diagram 1 shows such a conceptual arrangement in some detail. The policy areas shown in this diagram refer to federal government responsibilities, but do not correspond precisely with the current allocation of portfolios within the ministry or the present arrangement of departments. Each of these areas seems to be a major area of government responsibility, or related policy activity, and often of public debate and discussion. These policy areas then constitute relatively autonomous sub-systems. In each there are key interests which make demands (the main *inputs*) on decision-makers. For each there are also particular decision-making bodies or individuals who often have a substantial degree of freedom in deciding on what policies should be followed, on the administration of particular policies, and on adjudicating disputes between rival interests. The decision-makers arrive at decisions or policies which are the *outputs*. These outputs in turn affect the environment and by 'feedback' mechanisms lead often to changes in demands. A simplified model for the education sub-system is set out in Diagram 2. In this case, demands and supports come particularly from teachers and parents associations, from non-government school interests, from employers and from professional associations and trade unions. The decision-making core includes the Federal Minister for Education, the Department of Education, the Schools Commission and the Tertiary Education Commission. The most important decisions usually relate to the level of financial support for particular institutions or programs.

Although the education sub-system has a substantial degree of autonomy, it is by no means fully autonomous.

Instead it is substantially affected by decisions made in other policy areas (e.g. in the economic policy area with regard to overall levels of government expenditure), and many key decisions in the education area have to be ratified or actually taken at higher levels, e.g. by Cabinet, Cabinet Committees and Parliament.

(b) *The Internal Politics of Education Systems and Institutions*

If the term politics is defined in broader terms along the lines indicated earlier, a whole new area of educational politics is opened up within

educational institutions and systems. Often it is still assumed that educational systems and institutions are outside politics — that governments, parliaments, ministers and the like decide on policies to be followed, and that education departments, schools and colleges merely implement policy and get on with the business of teaching and learning. However, if politics is thought of as being essentially about authoritative decisions and the exercise of power and rule, then it follows that politics goes on at all levels within educational systems and institutions, from the senior levels of education departments down through the councils and senior administrative staff of educational institutions to individual departments and classrooms within them. This broader view of politics sometimes presents problems for those well accustomed to traditional usages of the term. Perhaps it would be helpful at this point to re-state this newer and broader view of politics by referring to a statement prepared in the late 1960's by a panel of leading American political scientists, appointed to make a review of the discipline of political science under the joint auspices of the Committee on Science and Public Policy of the National Academy of Sciences and the Problems and Policy Committee of the Social Science Council. They wrote in their report:

> Minimally, politics is concerned with decisions by which a society distributes its resources and regulates its collective life. By society is meant not only the territorial unit like a nation-state or one of its sub-divisions, but also units such as a nomadic tribe, a church, a business corporation, a fraternal association, or even an international body like the International Postal Union. From this perspective, even a small group like a troop of Boy Scouts or a family can be viewed as a political society. For all these collectivities, large or small, have in common the need to make decisions that enable them to pursue their objectives and that contribute to their maintenance. To do so, they develop more or less formal norms, rules, or customs, which are binding on all members, so that collective decisions can be made and their enforcement provided for.[6]

If we accept this view of politics, we can view both education systems and educational institutions as political as well as educational and social entities, and employ methods of political analysis to help understand their operation and problems. In doing this, systems theory can also be employed too. Education systems can be thought of as micro-political systems, performing all the basic functions of political systems. Admittedly, the political activities in some small primary school in most respects are relatively less important than those at top levels in a state education department or the Commonwealth cabinet. But in essence they are of the same kind; a decision by a school staff meeting to implement a new instructional program is just as political as a decision by the Commonwealth cabinet to allocate millions of dollars to some educational enterprise. Further, systems theory can be usefully applied to a number of administrative levels, going from an education system as whole down to an individual classroom within a school or a department in a university. This is illustrated with respect to primary and secondary schools in Diagram 3.

DIAGRAM 1

THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLITICAL SYSTEM AND KEY POLICY SUB-SYSTEMS

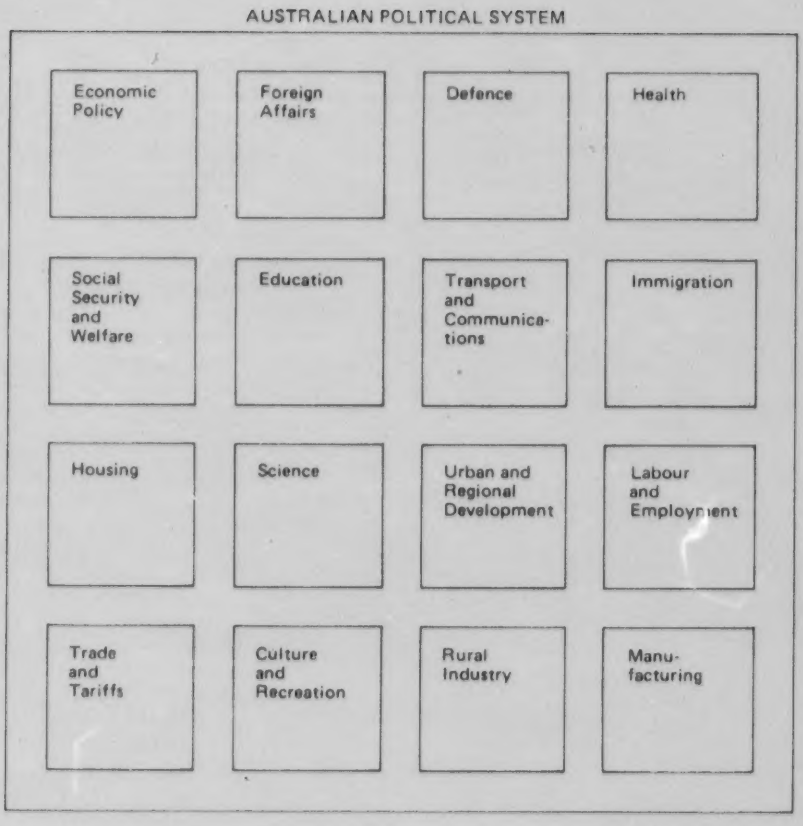


DIAGRAM 2

SIMPLIFIED MODEL OF THE FEDERAL EDUCATION SUB-SYSTEM

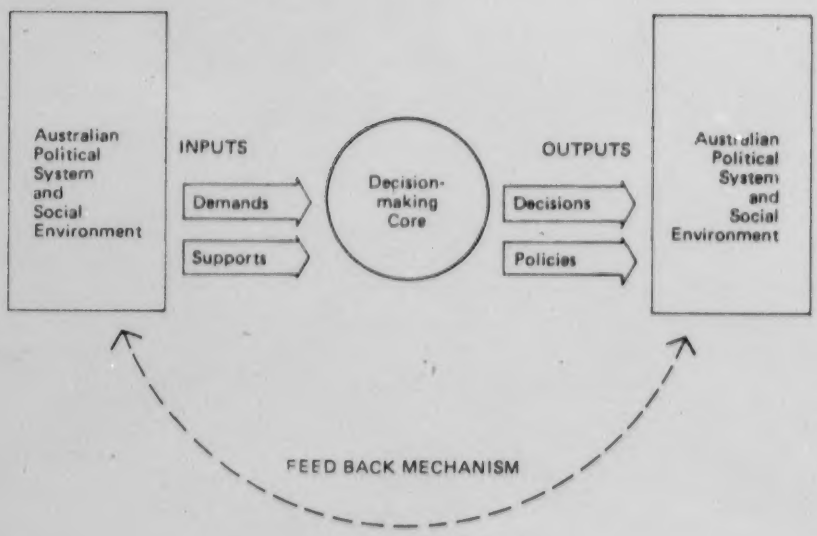
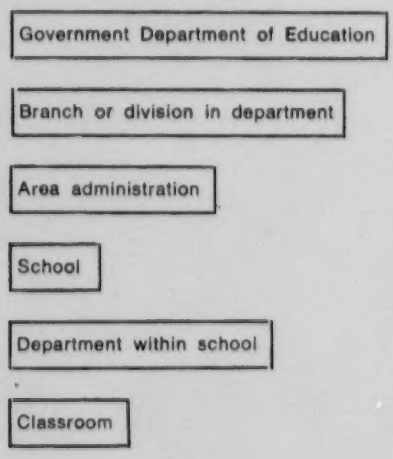


DIAGRAM 3

Levels to which Systems Theory can be applied with regard to the Analysis of School Systems



(c) *The Influence of Educational Institutions on Political Life and Behaviour*

Education institutions perform a surprising range of important political functions. Perhaps most important of all is the contribution that schools and other educative agencies makes as agents of political socialisation. Political socialisation refers to the process whereby individuals, particularly children and young people, acquire attitudes and feelings about the political system, and the kinds of political roles expected of them. This learning can be thought of as being cognitive (for example, basic knowledge about the system), affective (for example, positive or negative attitudes to authorities or symbols), evaluative (for example, judgements based on the application of certain standards to the performance of political roles), or motivative (for example, inculcatation of a sense of duty to participate).

Educational institutions are not the sole agents involved in the process of political socialisation; indeed studies suggest that in general the main source of Australian children's information and ideas about the political world is neither the school nor the family, but the mass media, particularly television news.[7] But the fact that schools have access to individual children for hours a day for at least ten consecutive years gives them a tremendous opportunity to influence ideas and attitudes, and there is good evidence to suggest that they do. Moreover, Australian schools, both government and private, deliberately seek to indoctrinate children with the basic values of society, and to instil acceptance of the political symbols of the nation and affection towards the authorities and the regime. Most schools and school systems still believe that this is part of their proper role and responsibility. Political information, attitudes and beliefs are conveyed to children at school assemblies, at observance of national days, and in social studies or social science lessons. But children are also influenced politically by the degree of regimentation and authoritarianism in school administration, by teaching methods and devices used by teachers to maintain discipline, by the political outlook of teachers and peer groups, and by the 'hidden curriculum'.

But education institutions perform other political functions as well; briefly some of the most important are as follows. First, as the radical critique of education has quite righty emphasised, school systems tend to operate to support dominant political ideologies. Thus in western societies the capitalist mode of production has influenced the structure and curriculum of schooling, which in turn provide support for a particular economic and value system.[8] Second, educational institutions help develop, formulate, and popularise basic social and political ideologies. Many political ideas which are now fairly commonly held in the Australian community were first promoted by university and school teachers. Third, the various educational institutions over the years have contributed significantly to political integration within the society. The highly centralised state education systems, despite a number of weaknesses in their structural arrangements, have helped develop and strengthen a sense of state and national identity; they have also helped bridge geographic distance and break down regionalism, and assimilate the children of migrants into the community. Through radio

and correspondence lessons children in the 'outback' have been encouraged to see themselves as members of the wider Australian community. Universal compulsory education has also contributed to vertical integration, helping to reduce the 'elite-mass gap'. On the other hand, it can be argued, that the continued existence of private and church schools has tended to accentuate established divisions in society. Fourth, formal education has a major influence on political recruitment processes. Education generally increases the chances of an individual to move to higher occupational and income levels, and so acquire political elite status. Further, without special kinds of education or without having attended certain educational institutions, individuals generally have little chance of competing for particular key positions in the public service or government. Fifth, universal compulsory education has been responsible for the achievement of mass literacy, which enables the effective operation of the present systems of political communication. Without mass literacy our political system certainly could not possibly operate in the way it does. Six, groups of people brought together through the education industry, such as lecturers, teachers and students, often perform important input roles in the wider political system. Student groups, for example, in the 1960's, clearly had an impact on government thinking on questions such as Vietnam, national service training, and apartheid. Seventh, the operation of educational institutions and the implementation of education policy have various important political consequences.

Among other things, they affect the types and levels of employment in society, social mobility and stratification, and the distribution of political and economic power. They also enable some individuals and groups to benefit socially and economically more than others, while the implementation of various policies helps generate whole ranges of new demands.

These kind of influences can be viewed within a systems model. In fact, it was through trying to employ systems theory to political analysis that David Easton of the University of Chicago became interested in the politics of education, particularly the role of educational institutions in the process of political socialisation.[9]

(d) *The Influence of Political Institutions and Processes on Education*

We have already noted that education political sub-systems, are not fully autonomous. Instead many key decisions are taken outside education departments and institutions, and often by others than the Minister in charge of the particular education portfolio.

But in addition, a wide range of political factors affect education policy and administration and the operation of education institutions. For example, financial factors and government economic policies often have a major influence on decisions about expenditure in the education area. Then too, as one of just many areas of government responsibility and activity, education has often been forced to conform to general administrative patterns and operating norms. The result is that today public education is financed and controlled in a similar fashion to other fields of state and Commonwealth responsibility, such as agriculture, health or social services. Education

departments are broadly similar in structure and organisation to other government departments, and generally they come under the same public service regulations and the same scrutiny of public service boards. Structural weaknesses in the political system sometimes have a crucial effect on education; a good example of this is federalism. Further examples are the way that any government's policy on education generally reflects its particular view of society and its political creed, and the habit from time to time for governments to make major policy decisions on purely party political grounds.

In this discussion of the main pattern of links between education and politics in Australian society, reference has been made on a number of occasions to systems theory. While this body of theory has utility for exploring connections between education and politics, as well as for pursuing more detailed investigations on particular facets of the politics of education, it should be emphasised that it also has clear limitations and a number of disabilities. Further, it should be stressed that there are various other bodies of theory and conceptual frameworks which can be usefully employed.

Doubts about Systematic Investigation

Our third barrier relates to doubts about both the feasibility and desirability of systematic investigation of political processes and behaviour in education. This barrier is more difficult to pin down, but I suspect that when educators dismiss a decision as being political they often, at least in part, are expressing doubts whether political processes and behaviour are capable of being explored systematically and in a similar fashion to educational processes, and if they can, whether in fact this is an appropriate task for an educator or educational researcher.

These kind of doubts are still more prevalent among educators and educational researchers than we may imagine. Of course, this is not surprising, since many educators still think of educational research as investigation in the psychological-quantative tradition; in fact, many of our university schools of education still offer graduate courses in research methods, which concern themselves exclusively with research in this tradition. And educational researchers, who demand the most rigorous methods in investigating teaching and learning, or the effect of a particular curriculum, often show a curious lack of vigour — or even an unwillingness to undertake any systematic data collection at all — when they talk about and speculate on education policy decisions and their implementation. Recently the ACER published an admirable set of essays under the title of *Educational Research for Policy Making in Australia.*[10]

In these researchers and others provide valuable comments on a range of educational research, but I failed to find any detailed discussion of how in fact policy is made for education, and how research can, should and does contribute. More significantly the detailed data and evidence presented related exclusively to research studies of educational issues or problems; no one presented data about policy processes.

My argument is that these doubts provide another barrier to the development of more adequate understandings. Further, I assert that systematic investigation of political processes and behaviour in education is both desirable and feasible. It is desirable in order that educators may understand better the contexts in which they work, the various constraints that operate, and the possibilities and means of coping and of achieving change. It is feasible because we already have available a range of concepts, approaches and research methods. Admittedly, these research methods differ somewhat from those used in traditional empirical educational research; their fundings are of a different kind and order. But what we need are methods and approaches appropriate to the particular task.

There is not space here to review even briefly the substantial amount of politics of education research that has been produced over the past decade and a half, especially in the United States.[11] However, I wish to draw together briefly some work related to policy processes in education.

At its core, politics in education systems and institutions is about policy — about the content of policy decisions and the values they express; about how and when policy decisions are made, and who participates in these decisions; and about policy implementation.

Policy can be viewed basically as a course of action or inaction towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired end. It embraces both what is actually intended and what occurs as a result of the intention. Policy may also be thought of as a guide to taking future actions and for making appropriate choices or decisions towards the achievement of a particular end, and as the setting of solutions to a problem.

Policy needs to be distinguished from related concepts, which often are used synonymously with the term policy. Some of these can be defined briefly as follows:

GOALS:	The desired ends to be achieved. (Goals by themselves usually provide no direction for their achievement.)
PLANS OR PROPOSALS:	The specified means for achieving goals.
PROGRAMS:	Authorised means for achieving goals.
DECISIONS:	Specific actions taken to set goals, develop plans, implement and evaluate programs.
EFFECTS:	The measurable impacts of programs (intended and unintended; primary and secondary).
LAWS, REGULATIONS:	These are the formal ingredients or legal expressions or programs and decisions.[12]

Three other points should be made about the concept policy. First, policies are not always stated; sometimes they are not written down or clearly identifiable in documents. By reviewing a series of decisions that have been made in a given area, it may be possible to deduce a policy. In addition, inaction or consistent decisions not to act may also imply a policy.

Second, many policies tend to be prescriptive and thus subject to interpretation. Lack of specificity in intention or action often leaves room for manoeuvre on the party of policy-makers, and particularly administrators. Third, many scholars find it useful to categorize policy by levels or types. One simple distinction is between general or basic policy, and administrative policy. The first is overarching and indicates a great deal of goal-relatedness. It usually has broad applicability to an entire organization and little in the way of specification as to actions. Administrative policy, on the other hand, is generally much more detailed and is concerned about what is to be done, where and by whom.

The content of policy, and the values and ideologies which underly different and often competing policy objectives are of considerable importance, and deserve much more emphasis and study. But because of space limitations, I will concentrate here solely on the policy process. Traditionally a clear distinction was made between policy-making and administration, and it was thought that within government departments and agencies that there was a clear differentiation of responsibility with regard to their functions: politicians made the policy, and administrators, even at the most senior levels only administered policies determined elsewhere. We have discovered, however, that this distinction between policy-making and administration is by no means entirely satisfactory, and that even at comparatively low levels in complex organizations and systems, bureaucrats inevitably participate in policy-making, and at times actually make policy on their own.

Because of these and other difficulties, a number of researchers recently have found it more useful to think in terms of a policy process, consisting a number of separate stages or phases, each distinguished by particular activities and functions. These sequential stages form a cycle which most, perhaps all, policies follow. Different researchers have defined the stages in different ways; I have found it useful to conceptualise the policy process as comprising the following stages:

(a) issue emergence and problem identification;

(b) policy development and authorization;

(c) policy implementation;

(d) policy evaluation; and

(e) policy termination.

Participation in the policy process within education systems and institutions today in Australia is generally not the sole preserve of any one group or set of individuals. Rather the norm is for a range of different participants to be involved, including what we may refer to as formal actors (Parliament, parliamentary committees, ministers, cabinet, departments and statutory agencies, and the courts), and informal agencies (including pressure groups, political parties and the media). Different participants obviously are involved in different ways; some, for example, participate solely in the policy development and authorization stage, while others are often involved in the implementation or evaluation stages, while others still may participate in all

stages. Who participates and how also varies over time, from place to place, from context to context, and from issue to issue. And participants differ too with regard to their overall goals, their interest in different issues, their ease of access to involvement in the different stages, their resources, and the amount of influence they command.

Of the five stages in the policy process, we now know far more about the first two stages than the others. It was also on these two stages that our main focus was in the study of the education policy process at state level. In the discussion here I propose to deal only with these two stages, and to do so within the context of education policy at state level with respect to primary and secondary education.

At any one time, there are dozens, perhaps hundreds, of potential issues that could become important in terms of education policy at state level. Yet over a limited period only a relatively small number of these will actually become issues, and even fewer will get on political agendas and thus become possible bases for the development of new education policies. This raises the intriguing and important questions of how issues emerge, and how they get on political agendas.

We began our exploration of issue emergence and problem identification with a framework developed by Cobb and Elder,[13] two American political scientists. They define an issue as 'a conflict between two or more identifiable groups over procedural or substantive matters relating to the distribution of positions or resources',[14] and they suggest that there are four main means by which issues are created. These are as follows:

(a) Manufacturing of an issue by one or more contending parties who perceive an unfavourable bias in the distribution of positions or resources. (They label such initiators as 'readjusters'.)

(b) Creation of an issue by a person or group for their own gain. (They label such persons or groups as 'exploiters'.)

(c) Initiators through an unanticipated event. (Such events they call 'circumstantial reactors'.)

(d) Generation by persons or groups who often have no position or resources to gain for themselves. (They label such initiators as 'do-gooders'.)

Various triggering devices, or unforeseen events, help shape issues that will be defined by the initiators. These include natural catastrophies (fires, floods, etc.), unanticipated human events (riots, strikes), technological changes in the environment, actual imbalances or bias in the distribution of resources leading to such things as protests and strikes, and ecological changes such as population movements.

The actual formation of an issue is dependent on the dynamic interplay between the initiator and the trigger device. This can be seen in diagram 4. A trigger device does not necessarily result in an issue; instead there must be a link between such a device and an initiator who converts the problem into an issue for a private or a public reason.

DIAGRAM 4

INTERPLAY RESULTING IN ISSUE CREATION

Cobb and Elder define two types of political agendas: the *Systematic agenda* for political controversy ('consisting of all issues that are commonly perceived by members of the political community as meriting public attention and as involving matters within the legitimate jurisdiction of existing governmental authority')[15] and the *institutional* or *formal agenda* ('that set of items explicitly set up for the active and serious consideration of authoritative decision-makers'). Three prerequisites are necessary for an issue to obtain access to a systematic agenda: (i) widespread attention or at least awareness; (ii) shared concern of a sizeable portion of the public that some type of action is required; and (iii) a shared perception that the matter is an appropriate concern of some governmental unit and falls within the bounds of its authority.

Overall this framework proved useful in our research, particularly in directing attention to initiators and their motivations, to trigger mechanisms, and to the processes whereby some issues get on political agendas. At state and territorial levels, with regard to education policy, many different actors are involved in issue emergence. In dealing with the situation in South Australia, Jones says that:

> the person who initiates the (policy) process is often neither the Director-General nor the Minister; it may be the S.A. Institute of Teachers, the Public Buildings Department, the (Schools Commission), a school principal, a principal education officer, a parent group, a teacher . . .[16]

And the various studies provide numerous examples of initiation by Ministers, Directors-General, senior departmental officers, teachers unions, and other interest groups.

With regard to the manner in which issues are initiated and the motivations of initiators, some of my colleagues found the Cobb and Elder categories useful. For example, in their study of New South Wales, Hogan and West writes:

> Each of the categories can be found in the emergence of education issues in New South Wales. 'Readjustors', who act to define established privileges or resources under challenge, can be seen in the

> 1968 teachers' strike where teachers saw themselves as falling behind their achieved professional and status standards. 'Exploiters' who manufacture an issue for their own gain, can be seen in the action of the Minister in the community and schools issue. 'Circumstantial reactors', whose activity is spurred by unexpected changes in society, the economy or some other critical event, can be seen in most of the cases. Indeed, such pragmatic, face-an-issue-after-it-arises planning is characteristic of New South Wales public administration. The fourth category of 'do-gooders', where group self interest yields to altruism or a sense of psychological well-being, is very obvious in the origins of the MACOS issue . . .[17]

But other researchers in the project found that these categories were inadequate. For example, in their study of Western Australia, Smart and Alderson provide case-studies of three issues — the introduction of the achievement certificate in 1971, the Free Textbook scheme introduced by the Tonkin Government, and the Government acceptance of responsibility for pre-school education. In the first case the initiative came from departmental officers who could not be described as 'do-gooders' in the usual sense; in the second the idea was long term ALP policy, and so the initiation was probably a mixture of altruistic and electoral motives; while in the third case the initiators included pre-school and other interests, the Liberal Party and officers of the Education Department. Further with regard to this last case-study, different participants attributed different motives to others: Smart and Alderson explain:

> Because of the complex nature of the issue's emergence it is difficult to classify it in terms of Cobb and Elder's issue creation categories. As is frequently the case different perspective on the motives for, and process of, issue creation. Some people in the Liberal Party including the then Minister, G. C. MacKinnon, and others in the Education Department considered there was, to use Cobb and Elder's terminology, 'an unfavourable bias in the distribution of resources for five year olds in Australia. They believed WA youngsters were not getting equivalent access to schooling (or pre-schooling) and that action should be taken to redress that balance. In this sense they might be seen as 'do-gooders' adopting an issue to right a wrong. On the other hand, many of the voluntary pre-school movement viewed these same actors not as 'do-gooders' but as 'exploiters' intent on implementing a policy for political and bureaucratic gain.[18]

Similarly in dealing with the way that the issue of the establishment of school council in Victoria emerged, Bessant points out that in one sense the interests they pushed for the councils could be said to be acting selfishly, but on the other hand:

> many of the people involved . . . had no positions or resources to gain for themselves, and were in fact responding to a particular 'climate of opinion' in education at the time which stressed community participation.[19]

We also became aware of two other weaknesses with the Cobb and Elder categories of initiators. First, they do not provide adequately for one of the most common patterns of issue emergence in education policy at state level, whereby the initiators are departmental officers or Ministers or both, reacting to perceived administrative difficulties or mal-functions. Thus in Tasmania the decision to establish matriculation colleges sprang first from recognition by senior officers of the Education Department that the growth of non-selective district high schools had created a difficult problem for matriculation studies.[20] Similarly in Victoria the move to create administrative regions came primarily from recognition by the Minister for Education and senior officers of the Education Department that as a result of rapid growth and increasing complexity of functions the head office could no longer cope, and that long delays were occurring in handling even simple matters which required routine approval,[21] while in New South Wales policy for excursions was reviewed in mid-1978 when departmental officers became increasingly aware that the existing brief policy statement for teachers and principals was inadequate.[22] Admittedly in all three cases, over quite lengthy periods complaints were made by many individuals and groups, but no one of these were really the initiators.

Second, sometimes it is hard to identify a single initiator, since issues emerge out of a new climate of opinion developed over a period.

With regard to trigger mechanisms, Cobb and Elder's categories are somewhat limited in exploring education policy at state level. But certainly a variety of different trigger mechanisms are important. Sometimes it may be a major development elsewhere in Australia (for example, publication of the report of the Interim Committee on the Schools Commission in 1973 was the single event which led to school councils becoming an issue in Victoria[23]), sometimes an election campaign (as in Western Australia in the early 1970s with the question of free textbooks[24]), sometimes a major administrative change leading to all kinds of repercussions (Mildern Mulford[25] demonstrate that in the ACT religious instruction in schools became an issue primarily as a result of adjustments to the move to a new education system), sometimes an overseas visitor (in Queensland the visit in 1977 of Mrs Norma Gabler, a persuasive Texan 'textbook watcher' greatly encouraged conservative interest groups such as STOP, CARE and Parents Campaign for Responsible Education, and accelerated their campaign of opposition to MACOS; soon after a teachers' seminar on MACOS was stopped by the Minister, and on 17 January 1978 the use of MACOS in state schools was banned by Cabinet[26]). At other times there is no single trigger event, but rather series of incidents which operate to transform a concern or conflict into an issue.

The process whereby some issues find a place on agendas similarly is by no means simple. Certainly pressure groups are often important in developing wide-spread community awareness and a sense of public concern that some kind of action is required. Their task is made easier when the content of the issue can be well articulated, and particularly when a catchy slogan (such as 'back to basics') can be employed. Often issues change while they are emerging and as they find a place on political agendas. In

the 1968 teachers' strike in New South Wales, a group of detailed complaints about class loads, extra lesson periods and salaries coalesced into generalized dissatisfaction with the whole handling of the administration of education, which then became more specific as a protest against the Public Service Board and Government, and finally became a protest with a highly personalised target of the Minister and the education member of the board.[27] In a similar way in Victoria in the early 1970s the issue of school councils provoked little real conflict in its early stages when if focussed on community use of school facilities and community links with schools. But later there was real conflict when the focus shifted to that of relative representation of various pressure groups on the proposed councils.[28]

With regard to the policy development and authorization stage of the education policy process at state and territorial level, it is clear that the formal powers of authorization are now widely shared among many different individuals and agencies. For many years formal powers have been more widely spread than has often been recognised; in addition, in recent years there has been deliberate efforts made to decentralize decision-making authority within education departments and agencies, and to involve a greater number of groups and interests directly in policy formulation.

Generally the pattern in each state is as follows. First, there is the Parliament, the Cabinet and the Premier. All three can be important, although seldom do any of them use anything like the potential powers they formally enjoy. Take the Parliament, for example. New legislation is subject to parliamentary debate and agreement, new regulations are open to scrutiny, education can become an important concern in debates on the budget (since it accounts for such a large proportion of Government spending), the Minister for Education must respond to enquiries from members during the regular question time, and any reports from the Department of Education and other agencies must be formally presented. Occasionally parliaments or governments intrude to a major extent in detailed policy related to schools; recent examples relate to curriculum and other issues in Queensland. But generally parliament leaves policy determination on most matters to the professionals and client groups.

Then, next within the education domain, formal policy authorization powers are generally shared by the Minister for Education, the Director-General, the Department (including officers other than the Director-General and sometimes schools), and by a whole set of statutory bodies with responsibilities for particular areas such as curriculum and examinations for the final years of secondary education, the classification and registration of teachers, or the determination of salaries for teachers. In addition, other major government agencies outside the education domain often have considerable regular powers in policy determination for education; these include the Premier's Department, the Public Works Department, the Crown Law Department. Of the state and territorial school systems it appears that the A.C.T. system is the one where the greatest number of decisions on education are formally made by other than education bodies; there the outside agencies of particular importance include the Department of Finance, the Department of Education, the Public Service Board, and the

National Capital Development Commission.[29] In addition in each state and the A.C.T. on occasions other government agencies too become involved in the making of policy with respect to schools; for example, recently in New South Wales the Anti-Discrimination Board became involved in the issue of sex discrimination in the appointment of school principals.[30] At times the Courts exercise major decision-making power on education issues.

Apart from this sharing of powers, many interest groups also play a significant part in policy determination. While interest groups seldom are delegated formal powers of authorization, key associations (such as teachers unions, subject teachers associations, parents groups) through representation on committees and boards are thoroughly integrated into the power structure of decision-making. Of course, this relates only to those associations which are recognised as being spokesmen for legitimate interests. Further still, the Federal Government and its agencies often exercise a decided influence.

This pattern of diffusion of formal power among many participants means that rapid change is often difficult to achieve. This can be frustrating to reformers such as Partridge, who complained a decade ago:

> To take part in educational reform in Australia can often be a very disheartening experience. The machinery is so cumbersome, there are so many officials, boards and committees holding the levers that operate it . . .[31]

Admittedly, in some situations change can be achieved quickly, and also against the wish of other key participants. This generally applies when one participant has sufficient formal power to act alone, and is willing to live with the consequences of such action. Thus in South Australia in the last 1960s the Minister of Education established a major inquiry into education against the wish of his Director-General; similarly in Queensland MACOS and SEMP were banned despite the wish of departmental officers, the Queensland Teachers Union and many influential educators in the state. But generally the normal pattern is for policy change to follow extensive consultation. This consultation takes place within education departments and agencies, between different government agencies (including federal and state), and between formal participants and interest groups. Sometimes this consultation is informal; at other times the setting is a formal committee within a department (such as the Policy and Planning Group in the New South Wales Department of Education consisting of the four Assistant Directors-General and the Secretary[32], or the Policy Committee in the South Australian Education Department comprising the Director-General, his deputies and division heads[33]), a statutory board, or a committee of enquiry on which both professional experts and interest groups are represented. Thus perhaps the dominant characteristic of the style of policy development is the search for a wide-based consensus, acceptable to both government and the key interest groups. And while many of the individual participants in the education policy development stage often do not have power to initiate a major change against the wishes of others, they sometimes can successfully veto changes sought by others. Thus Directors-General have considerable veto power especially over matters which originate within their own depart-

ments, while teachers unions have successfully blocked changes supported by both administrators and parents; examples of the latter are the ACT Teachers Federation's success in eliminating proposals for lay involvement in the selection of teachers for schools,[34] and the New South Wales Teachers Federation's blocking of the Government's proposals for parent involvement in the control of schools.[35]

In exploring education policy development and authorization at state level various theoretical frameworks can provide help.

For example, both the rational model and Lindblom's incrementalism can throw light on how participants actually behave and approach their tasks. The rational model[36] is based on the notion of rational choice and sees policy being formulated through a sequence of related steps, such as:

(a) recognition that a problem exists;

(b) preliminary appraisal on inquiry into the problem;

(c) identification of goals and objectives;

(d) canvassing of possible strategies to achieve objectives, and evaluating of the costs, benefits and consequences of each; and

(e) choice of action.

I suspect that this is the ideal model which many participants carry in their minds; it also is probably the common starting point for any group or individual approaching a particular policy development task. But as Lindblom says, in reality a great deal of policy-making does not fit this pattern, and the model fails to characterize the distinctively political aspects of policy-making, its disorder and the consequent strikingly different ways in which policies emerge. Lindblom writes:

> A policy is sometimes the outcome of a political compromise among policy makers, none of whom had in mind quite the problem to which the agreed policy is a solution. Sometimes policies spring from new opportunities, not from problems at all. And sometimes policies are not decided upon but nevertheless happen.[37]

Further, this model assumes a degree of perfection which policy-makers seldom achieve; generally they do not have time and information to consider all alternatives, nor to fully foresee the consequences of each. Often they may be unable to rank alternative higher than all others.

To cope with these problems, Lindblom suggests that policy-making is a fragmented process, being serial and sequential rather than comprehensive and deductive, and that policy essentially is shaped by a sense of political feasibility;

> It is decision making through small or incremental moves on particular problems rather than through a comprehensive reform program. It is also endless; it takes the form of an indefinite sequence of policy moves. Moreover, it is exploratory in that goals of policy-making continue to change as new experience with policy throws new light on what is possible or desirable.

> In this sense, it is also better described as moving *away* from known social ills rather than as moving *towards* a known and relatively stable goal.[38]

The task of policy-makers then is to devise solutions acceptable to the range of conflicting interests. This puts a limit on their innovative powers. They consider only alternatives which differ marginally from existing policies, because any greater change proposed would run little chance of acceptance. They seldom expect that a policy will provide the final resolution of a problem. Lindblom explains:

> Policy is not made once and for all; it is made and remade endlessly. Policy making is a process of successive approximation to some desired objectives in which what is desired itself continues to change under reconsideration.[39]

This, I suggest, is a better explanation of the process of policy determination once a committee has got down to work. Technical considerations are important, but often a great deal of time and effort is concerned with what is acceptable to government and to the key interest groups. And many other kinds of frameworks and theories are useful too — pressure group theory, bargaining theory, organisation models to name but a few.

Sense of Professional Powerlessness

When an educational professional dismisses a particular decision as being political, I suspect that this behaviour may in part spring from a sense of frustration and powerlessness. Certainly today many professionals in education feel under threat. The climate of public opinion has turned against education, governments are keen to reduce the level of spending on education services, and the schools and higher education are blamed for numerous ills. In addition, professionals are worried about their loss of power. Teachers are concerned about the threat of parent domination on school councils and the influence of ideologically conservative community groups. Senior administrators bemoan the loss of their traditionally 'autonomous' policy-making role and in interview situations Directors-General talk much more about the restrictions on them than the power they command. After a recent visit to Australia, where he talked with many senior state and federal education administrators, one American educator wrote.

> . . . many state-level administrators believe their influence is being eroded — and that's bad. Politicians are getting too involved in administrative matters. Parents are challenging professional prerogatives. Militant teachers want autonomy but not responsibility. The federal government is meddling with state priorities. Taxpayers want more education for fewer dollars. In this view, the good old days of centralised professional leadership are over, and rough days lie ahead.[40]

A sense of professional powerlessness, then, constitutes another barrier. Professionals are discouraged, irritated, frustrated; they are unable to operate as they think they should because often the real decisions are made by others. Instead of being decisions made by professionals on technical

grounds, they are decisions made by non-professionals on what are seen to be political grounds. And one reaction by some professionals is to want to draw a clear boundary between the worlds of professionalism and politics, and to confine their efforts to the domain of professionalism.

This reaction is quite understandable, for in many spheres of life professionals feel threatened as their autonomy and expertise are being challenged and eroded. However, for educational professionals to crave for isolation from the political world is both misguided and unfortunate. It is misguided since the domains of professionalism and politics cannot be easily separated, and since in any context educational decision-making is seldom made solely on the basis of technical considerations. It is unfortunate since the need for professional input into policy processes has never been greater. Further, although the autonomy of professional decision-making is severely limited, many professionals, both teachers and administrators, have numerous opportunities to participate and influence the various phases of the policy processes. My plea is for professionals in education not to be too discouraged by the apparent limitations on their autonomy in policy determination, but rather to recognise the numerous channels that are available for them to participate in developing and implementing policy, and the need to develop appropriate skills to do this effectively. Study of the politics of education may be one way to help achieve this.

We have already noted that many formal and informal actors participate in the education policy process at state level.

These various actors vary not only in the formal powers they command, but also in their actual influence in determining outcomes. This raises the important question of why some participants are more influential than others — of what the determinants of influence are. One way of approaching this problem is through use of the concept of political resources. A political resource can be defined as:

> . . . anything that can be used to sway the political choices or strategies of another individual. Or, to use different language, whatever may be used as an inducement is a resource.[41]

Different participants have available different resources, and differing overall, amounts of resources. For the senior administrator some key resources are legal authority, access to a Minister or senior political office-holder, high social status, recognition as an expert, access to information (including sometimes' confidential information), loyalty of colleagues, community goodwill, time, trust by pressure group leaders, technical expertise, access to public relations and information distribution bureaux and support from other government agencies. Influence depends on the resources available to the participant; but it also depends on use of the resources. Sometimes an administrator, for good reason, is not able or willing to utilise all potential resources to the full. Wildavsky has commented:

> That resources exist does not mean that they will be used fully, skillfully, or at all. Most people use their resources sparingly, with varying degrees of effectiveness. The cost in time, energy, money, and ego damage usually stems too great in comparison with the

benefits which appear remote and uncertain. As a result, there is a vast reservoir of resources lying untapped by people who prefer not to use them.[42]

And administrators, like other participants vary in their skills in resource utilisation — in skills such as judgement about timing, ability to argue a case succinctly, ability to form coalitions, effectiveness in bargaining and persuasion, and judgement in anticipating the early reactions of other participants.

Some of the political resources available to the senior education administrators are fixed; for example, the formal powers of a senior administrator may be determined by legislation, which the Government in power may have no intention of changing.

But others can be changed, and these include political skills. No one has yet analysed systematically and in a detailed fashion the various political skills that significantly affect how successful a particular bureaucrat will be in policy determination in the Australian context. But we can get some clues from overseas literature. For example, in one recent U.S. study by Bardach[42] the key skills in achieving influence are categorized as skills in:

(a) mapping the contours of existing policies and their audiences;
(b) skills in designing proposals and in seeking support;
(c) skills in building a coalition;
(d) skills in meeting opposition; and
(e) skills in manoeuvre during a struggle.

The first problem a participant must solve in trying to change policy in a given area is to understand the existing set of programs and practices in the area, and to know who cares about them sufficiently to be mobilized either as political allies or opponents. The latter includes understanding of both ideological consensuses and cleavages, and of the patterns of factions, interests and alliances. The participant then needs skill in designing a proposal in such a way to maximize its chances of securing sufficient support from key interests. By far the most important obstacle to this objective is the tendency for major policy changes to disrupt a complex ecology or organizational programs and practices and, consequently, to displease some interests in the long run and a great many others in the short run. Thus the policy innovator needs to be able to design features likely to invigorate rather than disturb. As Bardach says, 'Designs for disruptive change are relatively easy to conceive, whereas their counterparts require more sophisticated analysis and more disciplined imagination'.[43] The skilled participant can also sometimes work to mediate between the presumed incompatibilities of his proposal and the policy preferences of key interests, and to win endorsement from neutrals. These tasks involve persuasion, and sometimes bargaining. Next the participant has to propagandize his proposal among others in the attentive public and beyond.

This involves skills in presentation and marketing, since it is not simply a matter of winning endorsement but of persuading others to exert themselves in order to win the support of still others. Generally the experienced

political entrepreneur concentrates not just only on interests who are likely to be favourable to the proposal, but of these on ones who are relatively free to commit their resources to the cause. To move on, the participant also needs skills in meeting opposition. Opponents can hurt a proposal by undermining its sponsor's resources and credibility, and by manoeuvering to set the arena and scheduling parameters of the contest advantageously for their own side. Last, the participant needs skills to manoeuvre in such a way during a struggle to maximize the chances of success; these include judgments about timing, about making details more widely available to different publics, and about appealing to uncommitted groups.

A sense of professional powerlessness, then, is another barrier. But this needs to be eliminated. Professionals have more opportunities than they often believe to influence policy, but to do so effectively they need understanding and skills. One good reason why professional educators should study the political aspects of education is to help them become more effective participants in policy processes.

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LEVELS OF DECISION-MAKING: A NEW ZEALAND PERSPECTIVE

P. W. Boag

As might be expected in such a labour intensive industry, as education, the making of decisions, particularly decisions affecting people is an integral part of the total process.

What is perhaps unusual is the number of different decisions taken at so many different levels, all of which to some degree affect a large number of people: decisions that range from those of the broad policy making variety at the level of government, to those of quite specific import at the level of class-room management. Indeed, it could be said that a teacher in a class-room would, in the course of an hour, make as many critical decisions as a senior executive in another form of management makes in a day, or even a week.

Apart from the constant pressure that this places on those involved, there is as well the additional tensions that come when the inevitable questions of accountability arise.

The themes of this Conference are indeed relevant and timely.

New Zealand, a comparison

Over the last four years I have been privileged to have attended a number of meetings of the Australian Education Council, that is the regular meeting of the State and Commonwealth Ministers of Education, as well as the Conferences of Directors-General of Education, again both State and Commonwealth. I would hope, therefore, in this paper to bring out some of the points of similarity and differences between the systems as I have observed them in action.

Before I can embark on any comparative look at the problems of decision-making, however, it seems to me that it would be most profitable if I were to give those Conference members who may not be conversant with the New Zealand system some indication of its workings by way of a brief, and consequently very generalised, sketch of our system as it is today, and as it has developed since the first planned settlement of the country 140 years ago.

New Zealand is a small country in terms of population — a little smaller than the state of Victoria, or about one-fifth of the size of Australia as a whole. Despite its lack of size, it has remained a separate and independent country, contrary to the confident assertion of the Sydney Gazette in 1831 that

> "Nothing is more evident than that New Zealand must, at no distant period, form an integral and productive part of the immense Australian empire."

Apart from the descendants of the original Maori population which, together with those who have come from the Pacific Islands, make up slightly more than 10% of the total community, it is a relatively homogeneous society with ancestral colonial roots of the majority cultural group tracing back in the main to Britain and a few European countries.

As in Australia the origins of its education system can be found in those of 19th century. England and Scotland. This, in turn, has meant that both systems have much in common.

There are, however, some distinct differences between the two countries. Perhaps the most significant from an administration or a policy-making point of view, is the greater proportion of the New Zealand school population in government schools. In contrast to Australia where more than 20% of primary and secondary students are in non-government schools (over 24% in Victoria), only 10% of New Zealand students are in private schools. The majority of these schools are, usually, small church schools and even most of them are currently in the process of integrating into the state system.

When this dominance of the state system is added to the fact that education in New Zealand is almost wholly centrally funded through a single Government Department of Education the outside observer might be forgiven for conjuring up a picture of an education monolith with the ultimate power of over-riding, if it so desired, individual freedoms or variations.

Any education system, particularly one which wishes to be able to retain public confidence and adapt to a variety of changing demands must develop its own pattern of checks and balances at all levels — from that of the individual to the most senior policy making forum.

To understand something of the New Zealand solution to the challenge of providing an appropriate system of state education which could meet these criteria, it is first necessary to look briefly at the development of the country as a whole.

Early Education

The planned European settlement of New Zealand started in 1840 with groups of colonists sailing out from Britain to quite separate parts of the country.

This discrete pattern of settlements, each of them with different backgrounds and aspirations, together with the elongated nature of the country itself and the consequent difficulties in communication, all contributed towards the development of the first system of government. Like Canada — and Australia — New Zealand was initially a collection of provinces, each with its own Provincial Council. There was a central General Assembly, but its powers were largely confined to matters such as customs, coinage, justice and Crown lands.

Among their other concerns, therefore, the Provincial Councils assumed responsibility for the provision of education in their districts — to the extent considered appropriate by the local communities.

Of all the settlements, Otago most fully accepted this responsibility. The first Scottish settlers, who saw education as the keystone to future development and social equity, had arrived in Otago in 1848 complete with plans for primary schools, secondary schools, for both boys and girls, and for a university. With support and assistance from the Free Church of Scotland, all of these objectives were attained in a remarkably short time and state-provided education for those who could merit it was soon to become a reality in the far south.

The tradition of the Scottish respect for and desire for education has persisted and it is not surprising that one of New Zealand's more respected Ministers of Education, Peter Fraser, was also a Scot. His statement, in 1939, of the Government's education policy still persists in many ways as this country's educational lode star.

> "The Government's objective, broadly expressed, "stated the Hon Peter Fraser, "is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country has a right as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers."

Otago apart, however, the picture of educational provision in the rest of the country was much more patchy. Some provinces, notably Nelson and Canterbury, did recognise from the start the importance of education, particularly primary education; secondary education, however, even in those provinces, was seen rather as the preserve of the sons of the wealthy landowners, than as the right of the labouring classes.

As one politician remarked, even as late as 1871, any move to make secondary education generally available to everyone would be counter productive, resulting in many a child becoming discontented

> "with the state of life in which it had pleased God to put him",

there would be no-one left to clean the boots, and New Zealand would become

> "a nation of educated paupers".

In other provinces, the adequate provision of education, even at the primary level, was slow in getting under way. The early colonists, whose main preoccupation was largely involved with wresting a living from the land, indeed seemed to assume that education was something that would look after itself.

Not all the early citizens were happy with this lackadaisical approach. A prominent Wellington resident — one of the most backward of provinces in the field of education — complained in the 1840s that there was no educational provision available for him, and other fathers with growing sons, even for those who could afford it. He found little sympathy, however, from his contemporaries who seemed content, as he put it

> ". . . to bring up their sons as common stockmen. The result will be that they will inevitably become coarse, rude and unenlightened — though probably wealthy. The union of great wealth with coarse habits is one conspicuous in New South Wales and it will be so here."

Although New Zealand has ultimately come to accept the concept of universal education, although not perhaps with as quite a high a priority as that accorded to it by Napoleon who said

> "Public instruction should be the first object of government", or as Cicero, who had earlier asked "what greater or better gift can we offer the Republic than to teach and instruct our youth?"

the country has for many years accepted that education for all its citizens was essential and should be something the state should pay for rather than leave to private enterprise. The road to this acceptance was, however, slow and, at times, painful.

For example, although the question of the provision of education was raised at the first meeting of the Canterbury Provincial Council by the Provincial Superintendent, this was not necessarily an indication of any burning desire to develop responsibilities in this field. Indeed, the Superintendent raised it with, what would seem to present day New Zealanders, a rather surprising slant —

> "In what manner, and to what extent", he asked, "ought the state to interfere in the education of the young?"

The issue to be debated was not the desirability of education, but rather whether prime responsibility for educational provision more properly rested with denominational schools than with central or provincial government.

Similar questions were no doubt being raised in other provinces, although with differing degrees of integrity or urgency. The issue was, however, brought rapidly to a head in 1876 and 1877 with the passing, first, of the Abolition of Provinces Act and, subsequently, the Education Act — the key decisions of the central parliament that laid the foundations for the New Zealand education system as it is today.

From these and subsequent debates, many of them heated and some indeed figuring prominently as issues in national parliamentary elections, there emerged two themes that have continued through New Zealand educational thinking from that time — the desirability of education for all citizens of all ages, and the responsibility that this places on the community as a whole to make sure that the necessary educational opportunities and facilities are made available.

A New System

By 1876 New Zealand had realised that the smallness of the country did not justify perpetuating an elaborate system of provincial administration. The provinces were therefore formally abolished, and government administration, including funding, i.e. the raising of taxes and the dispersal of money, was centralised on Wellington.

The Education Act of 1877 which decreed that, from henceforth, education in New Zealand, i.e. primary education, was to be free, compulsory and secular, established a pattern of administration based on the original provinces.

Whether this was a sop in return for the loss of other, "more important", responsibilities or from some far-sighted philosophy of future desirable patterns of education administration, is not clear.

Whatever the motives, the result has been a pattern of educational administration and policy making that tends to be unique — a system that is at the same time both centrally funded and locally controlled.

Although some of the architects of original 1877 Act had envisaged a method of funding which would involve financial contributions from the local communities as well as from central government, this was rejected finally on the grounds that disparities were already evident in that the quality of education, or rather the degree of financial support to education, varied, quite markedly, from district to district depending on the wealth of the local communities.

The 1877 provision for a system of central funding through a single government central Department of Education was not, however, meant to imply any significant diminution of the extent to which local communities themselves would be expected to continue to carry major responsibility for running the education system.

Primary Schooling

In the primary sector, therefore, we had, and still have, a pattern of ten Education Boards with geographical areas of responsibility based on those of the former provinces.

Education Boards are financed by the central government with funds disbursed through the central department. They have the responsibility of employing — that is hiring, firing, and disciplining their teachers — as well as of building, maintaining and equipping their schools, within the limits of available funds, and within nationally determined guidelines.

Although the district Education Boards control the schools and employ the teachers, they are not directly involved in the professional work of the schools. Responsibility for inspection of teachers, supervision of school curricula, in-service training of teachers rests with the Department, although its field inspectorate are housed with the Boards and act as their professional advisers.

Underpinning the Education Boards there was to be a network of School Committees, one per primary school with members elected every two years at meetings of all householders in each school district.

The School Committees, in turn, were to be responsible for electing the members of their local Education Board, again for two year terms.

School Committees are, however, responsible for the day to day control of the school plant and operations, using money channelled through the Education Board. They also have a limited, but only limited, control of the educational functions of their schools.

A School Committee has no place in the appointment of teachers, for instance. It does, however, have a place in some aspects of its school's operations. Probably the most significant in light of the "secular" requirement of the 1877 Act is its role in the field of religious instruction. In

contrast to its lack of authority over most parts of the primary school curriculum the School Committee has the authority to decide whether religious instruction should be carried out at all, even though legal requirements mean that it must be conducted outside formal school hours. The Committee can also decide what form it should take, who should teach it and, if necessary, the syllabuses to be used.

Although the proposals for a system of local financial contributions to the costs of education were swept away by arguments of equality of opportunity, regardless of wealth, it is of more than passing interest in a paper whose main theme is to deal with levels of decision making (and responsibility) to note the reasons advanced by the then New Zealand Minister of Education in support of the proposals.

> "It is not only for the purpose of revenue that the levying of this tax is deliberately proposed by the Government," he said. "Although the rate is a very small one, it reminds parents of the responsibility under which they are with regard to the education of their children, and we propose to leave this capitation rate in the hands of the householders themselves, to be spent locally in the different districts for the convenience and comfort of the children in the school buildings ;and for the maintenance of those buildings. We propose that these capitation rates shall be the absolute revenue of the school committees . . .'

Mr (later Sir Charles) Bowen then went on to discuss difficulties facing committees without this kind of authority:—

> "You cannot ask men who take a keen interest in the school affairs of their districts to spend all their nights, after the labour of the day, in carrying on a correspondence with the (Education) Board upon every trivial item of expenditure; at any rate they will not do it without feeling very much annoyed."

By way of illustration he added,

> "Under the old system, in some parts of the colony, they could scarcely fill up a rat hole without first writing to the Board about it."

Some School Committee members I have spoken to would probably maintain that the situation, a century later, is not much different.

Although the original intention of the 1877 Act had been to give the local School Committees real authority so that they could be an effective check on the power of the Education Boards, this did not eventuate.

The reasons appear to be two-fold: first, that advanced by Sir Charles Bowen, which dealt with the power accruing to the body with the responsibility for controlling financial and other resources and, secondly, the growing influence of the teacher organisations with their quite proper concern for uniformity of conditions of service and methods of appointment, together with the avoidance, as far as possible, of a teacher's career or conditions of tenure being unduly determined by local prejudices.

This, in turn, has led to the development of standard conditions of service from Board to Board; of appointments committees in each Board jointly representing the Board, the teachers organisations and the Department; and of nationally approved guidelines for the handling of disciplinary cases, etc.

The structure set up in 1877 has remained more or less unchanged to this day, although there have been some shifts in emphasis over the years.

The School Committees, for example, have not proved to be as effective counter balances to the Education Boards as the original architects of the scheme had envisaged. This role soon came to be filled by the Department itself whose size and influence has grown significantly since it was first established.

Attempts over the years by the Department and/or Ministers of Education to streamline or centralise the system further by abolishing the Education Board system altogether have been unsuccessful, largely because the Boards have been adept at marshalling public support on their side.

In 1930, for example, a Parliamentary Committee rejected any suggestion of abolishing Education Boards because, as it reported:—

> "The public of New Zealand would rather bear the burden of the extra cost of the present system than change it for one of bureaucratic control, however much cheaper the latter may be."

The 1962 Commission of inquiry into New Zealand education discussed the issues of centralisation and decentralisation and reached the same conclusion, i.e. that although

> ". . . a fully centralised system would be swifter in decision and cheaper to operate in a country of small size, such as New Zealand, than any decentralised or semi-decentralised system . . . it would not, however, necessarily provide a better education for New Zealand pupils or be acceptable to the New Zealand community."

Secondary Schooling

The New Zealand secondary system has had a somewhat different development. As might have been expected from the pattern of colonisation the first schools on the scene took as their models, the English and Scottish institutions of the 19th century. These schools were initially autonomous institutions each with its own board of control and each serving the needs of their local districts as they perceived them with curricula largely derived from Britain and more particularly from the British public school system.

Despite various moves towards centralisation that have taken place since, the secondary school system remains much the same. With a few exceptions, each school has its own separate Board of Governors of which the majority of members are elected by the parents of students attending the school. Teachers are employed, appointed, disciplined by the Boards of Governors although, as with the primary system, procedures for each of these activities are laid down in nationally determined guidelines. Within these guidelnes, Boards have complete freedom in, for example, the appointment of staff, from the Principal down.

Originally individual Boards had freedom to control all aspects of their staffing and to set their own pay scales — with resulting differences from school to school. Pressures both from the teachers, as well as from schools who saw themselves disadvantaged under this system, resulted in uniform pay scales, grading systems and conditions of service being established in the 1920s — a system that has remained to this day.

For a number of years, New Zealand maintained a parallel system of technical schools but not through great desire to "'stream" post-primary students as happened in Britain after the enactment of the 1944 Butler Education Act or even principally to provide a system of schooling for those not "academically" inclined. The technical schools developed rather as a result of the frustration felt by the first Inspector-General, George Hogben, at his inability to persuade the original academically-oriented high schools to enrol more than a token number of working class children, or even to offer programmes or subjects more suited to the needs of the whole population and not just those heading for university studies.

Although the technical schools had been set up with more comprehensive curricula and with different salary scales, different conditions of service and a different teachers' organisation, they were not just an alternative to the secondary schools, catering solely for the lower end of the academic spectrum; they attracted their share of capable students and developed their own academic programmes to suit their needs.

Ultimately the secondary and technical streams came together in the 1940s with the result that the New Zealand secondary system is now one of comprehensive high schools operating under a single set of conditions and with a single secondary teachers union.

Although secondary schools have been subject to Departmental inspection since the 1870s they have traditionally been under little formal constraint, particularly in terms of curriculum. They have never, for example, been bound by the secular provisions of the Education Act. Principals and their staffs have always had freedom to decide what they wish to teach and how it should be taught — "subject", as the Regulations state, "to the general direction of the Board (of Governors)".

The lack of formal, regulatory constraints does not necessarily mean the same thing as the complete absence of any constraints at all. Until 1945 the single most powerful constraining influence on the work of the secondary schools were entry requirements of the universities and the prescriptions laid down for the quite small group of subjects approved for the externally examined university entrance examination.

Although this examination is not sat until the fourth year of secondary schooling (Year 11 in Australian terms), its effects obviously extend throughout the whole school programme.

Changes introduced in 1945, by way of Parliamentary Regulation introduced further constraints by laying down guidelines for the curriculum to be followed by all pupils in their first three years of secondary schooling (corresponding approximately to the Australian Years 8 to 10).

These Regulations stemmed from the findings of a 1942 Ministerial Committee of inquiry. The Thomas Committee as it is commonly called, after its Chairman, the Headmaster of one of New Zealand's oldest and well regarded boys' high schools, recommended the fixing of a "core of studies" in their first three years of secondary schooling.

Although the adoption of this recommendation has had a number of beneficial effects, particularly in helping to avoid as far as possible the development of any stratification of schools, by curriculum or otherwise, into prestige schools — and others, and in helping all schools meet the problems posed by the high degree of mobility in the New Zealand population, these were not the main reasons behind the Committee's thinking.

The Committee's intention was rather to ensure that students should be able to pursue a general education programme to as late a stage as possible and not be forced too early into undersirable specialisation, whether academically or vocationally orientated.

The Committee stated that its concept of a general education programme and its integral "core of studies" contained.

> ". . . what any intelligent parent might expect his son or daughter to be given at school (apart from studies indicated by special vocational needs or talents). A parent might reasonably ask that his child should have a course in physical education so that he may preserve good bodily health, that he be able to participate freely in games; that he have an adequate command of the mother tongue, and be able to enjoy something of its literature; that he continue the study of his social environment in time and space — in other words that he understand in their main outlines the social studies of history and geography, and be introduced to the current problems of his country and his time; that he have a knowledge of the mathematics required for ordinary non-school purposes and be conversant in at least an elementary way with the methods and achievements of science; that he be able to listen intelligently to music, perhaps to sing or to play a musical instrument; and that he have acquired a reasonable degree of skill in an art or craft. An intelligent parent would wish a daughter to have, in addition, the knowledge, skill, and taste required to manage a home well and make it a pleasant place to live in."

The Regulations that followed the publication of this Report translated the concept of the core in terms of a minimum number of hours per week for each subject area for each of the first two years of secondary schooling together with a stated minimum coverage for the full three years.

It is important to note that these minima in total, however, amount to less than half of the full school week and that schools have complete freedom to do what they wish in the remainder of their programmes.

In the event, schools have tended to be less than venturesome in their use of this freedom and have kept pretty much to traditional patterns — with concentration in terms of time and resources generally going to the

more academic, examination-oriented subjects and the bare minimum amounts of time being spent on the "fringe", i.e. non-examinable (for most pupils) areas of music, art, craft, physical education.

Other Levels

I have spent some time outlining the patterns that have developed in the administration of primary and secondary education, for these are the sectors of compulsory education, which by law is from 6 years to 15 years, and are consequently the largest and most complex. The other institutions — universities, technical institutes, teachers colleges and pre-school — have developed, as might have been expected, along roughtly similar lines.

All sectors are locally controlled and centrally funded (with the exception of the pre-school section where the initial kindergarten building is still provided on a subsidy basis, i.e. government money is added to funds raised by local kindergarten organisations.)

There are, however, some variations from sector to sector, but not great enough to distort the over all pattern.

The universities, for example, are funded on a quinquennial grant basis negotiated with the government by the Universities Grants Committee; new course prescriptions are cleared through a central Grants Committee — operated Curriculum Committee; there is a single university entrance qualification, although in some cases, such as special schools which have limited intakes, qualifications higher than the bare minimum may be necessary to secure entry.

Teachers colleges are centrally funded but have their intakes determined annually by the Government in terms of forward projections for teacher supply and demand; their programmes are broadly established by Regulation, but only in general terms.

Technical institutes, which are placed in the trade/technician, rather than the technologist, sphere of training, are again centrally funded on an annual basis, roughly according to the previous year's generated demand and usage, but with some provision for additional growth as new demands are perceived which cannot be met out of existing resources. As service institutions, the institutes tend to have their programmes largely determined by outside agencies, especially in the trade and technician fields where prescriptions are laid down by external examining Boards representing industry and employee groups.

So much for my brief description of New Zealand and its education system. I referred at the outset to the pattern of checks and balances that are found in any good education system. These, of course, have implications not only for the functioning of the system, but also for the decision-making process that is the theme of this Conference.

Decision-making

Where in the different patterns of education do the various levels of decision-making lie?

For a government system of education one obviously starts with the government itself and, in particular, with the Minister appointed to be responsible for the Education portfolio.

It is at this level, of course, that the first and most obvious difference between the New Zealand and Australian systems is apparent. Both countries have inherited the Westminster style of government and all that that implies in terms of Ministerial responsibility and accountability.

In contrast to the New Zealand system, the Australian state/federal organisation immediately introduces complexities into the pattern of Ministerial responsibilities. If on the one hand the Commonwealth Minister and his colleagues have the responsibility of raising public money to fund an education system but his state counterparts and their colleagues have the responsibility of using these funds to run their own systems of education, where does the question of accountability, whether financial or social, rest?

If, for example, the Australian community becomes overwhelmingly concerned with standards in basic skills in government schools, who is held responsible — the Minister in Canberra who should have used the large amounts of taxpayers' money spent on education more profitably, or the Ministers in the state capitals who have failed to deliver the goods

The New Zealand system, by contract, with its simpler pattern of a single Minister directly responsible both for raising the money and for establishing priorities for its expenditure appears to be much more straightforward. Needless to say, however, it has its own inbuilt sets of frustrations.

Although the New Zealand Minister of Education is designated by law as responsible for central Department of Education neither he nor his department control any schools or employ any teachers, apart from those in a few special schools. The great proportion of the money voted for education is spent, not by the Department but by other agencies, i.e. the various controlling authorities. Nor has the Minister any direct control over the controlling authorities themselves. The Government sets out guidelines for the expenditure of money, appointment of staff, etc but has no control over the priorities established by the authorities within those guidelines. Nor has the Minister any power of direction over controlling authorities, although an Amendment Bill at present before Parliament may alter this situation, particularly in cases of serious transgression.

Nor, it should be noted here, does the New Zealand Minister or the Government have any control over the appointment of departmental officers who are state servants and subject to the autonomous procedures governing the state service. This, too, is at variance with some of the Australian practices.

In contrast to the apparently simpler situation within the Australian states where the department directly controls the schools and employs the teachers, its New Zealand counterpart deals with the schools and the teachers at second-hand. In New Zealand, therefore, the process of educational administration and decision making is in many ways one of discussion and negotiation, of consultation and persuasion.

At the level below that of the department the primary Education Boards are responsible for the schools under their control, but have little direct say in what is taught in these schools or how it is taught.

On the other hand, although these Boards are responsible for spending quite large amounts of public money, they are not in a position to be held directly accountable for that expenditure in the way in which a Government Minister can be. This "all care and no responsibility" situation has generated more than its share of tensions over the century — tensions between Boards and their School Committees to whom they are theoretically accountable; and between Boards and the Government administration. The latter was undoubtedly a significant contributing factor in the various attempts, already referred to, to abolish the Boards or to curtail their powers.

Further down the ladder in the primary system we have the situation whereby principals and school committees have a joint responsibility for running their schools in a manner best suited to the needs of their communities, but in the extremely important element of the apointment of staff to enable them to do this, they have virtually no say; they have to take whoever is appointed by the district appointment committees.

Again, with a system of rights of appeal against non-appointment, even these appointments can be upset by a body with no direct connection with the school concerned.

The secondary situation differs from the primary, but basically only in matters of detail, rather than substance.

I have already referred to the fierce independence of the secondary schools during the early years. Although this independence has to a great extent been curbed by Parliamentary Acts and Regulations, the schools still have a significant degree of autonomy.

In the field of staff appointments, for example, secondary school boards make their own decisions, in contrast to their primary counterparts, which must act through appointment committees on which they have but one voice out of three, and against whose decisions even then exist rights of appeal.

In curriculum, as well, the legislation gives secondary school boards general authority over the professional operation of their schools. Specific control is, however, reserved to their principals and staffs. For example, a school board has the power to decide whether or not a particular subject is to be taught in the school or what kinds of punishment are permissible; it has no authority over how a subject is to be taught, or who is to take it, or which student shall be punished.

The next level of responsibility and decision-making is probably the most crucial in any education system, for in the end the important work of the schools is in the hands of their principals and their professional teaching staffs.

It is one of the hard facts of education administration that new approaches to education, major policy decisions made at Government,

Department or even Board level are not likely to be effective unless the teacher in the classroom accepts them and is committed to putting them into practice.

This whole structure of policy- and decision-making processes that I have outlined adds up to a fairly complex set of different, but neverthless interdependent forces — all basically interested in providing a good system of education.

No structure is static, however, and even as one describes it there are, at the same time, tensions at play seeking to change it, as one would expect in any living system.

In New Zealand, for example, the old argument between the "centralists and the provincialists' is still alive and well, although not argued in the same context, or between the same protagonists, as it was a century ago.

Official policy is one of decentralisation and the development of local autonomy and local decision making to the greatest extent possible. Working against this, however, whether intentionally or not, are some powerful centralising forces that cannot be ignored: for example, the very existence of a single Minister of Education who is politically accountable for all that happens in education; and the heavily centralised and rather bureaucratic teacher organisations who, with the various other pressure groups that spring up from time to time, find it easier to deal with one central authority than with a multitude of local agencies.

Having said all this, I suppose the most important factor to be taken into account is that, despite its apparent imperfections and contradictions, the New Zealand system has the big advantage that it works. Furthermore, it appears to work to the satisfaction of the people in it and who have the responsibility of making it function.

Indeed, few of the participants would see the points I have made as necessarily being defect in the system. They would probably see them instead as inherent and essential ingredients of a system that has, over the years, evolved into one with a reasonable balance between central and local control, between central and local responsibilities and between central and local participation.

Looking Forward

In the course of this, obviously, over-simplified outline of how a system of education functions I have referred to the roles and responsibilities of central government, the Minister, the central department, the boards and, where appropriate, their school committees, and the professional teaching staff.

It would be noticed that there are two significant omissions — the individual student and his parents.

The student does have a clearly defined place in the education system, at least at the institutional level, for without him they would not function! Some institutions have gone further and have developed forms of student government in an attempt to provide for them some, rather minimal, role in the local decision-making process; but few, if any, of these have any real significance in the administration process, even at the local level.

There is, however, no real role for the parent in the formal educating process. The parent has the legal responsibility of enrolling his child in a school, and of keeping him there until he achieves the age of 15. The parent is also able to contribute to the running of the school as an elected member of a school committee or board, or as a, usually, money-raising member of a Parent Teacher Association. He has, however, no legal place in the professional work of the school, or the important educational decisions made on his or his child's behalf.

All too often this process of holding parents at arms length results in their opting out of their responsibilities, not only in the education, but the social sense as well; and in the schools thereupon complaining that they are being left to pick up the pieces.

In my view, one of the major, urgent tasks in education, certainly at the primary and secondary schools levels, is to define and maintain an appropriate contributing role, first, for parents and then, for the community at large. Perhaps, despite our desire for equality of opportunity regardless of parental wealth or position, we may have to return to some proposal, such as that advanced by Sir Charles Bowen in 1877, which saw a local tax as a means of reminding parents and local communities "of the responsibility under which they are with regard to the education of their children."

In any case education and education decision-making will not be a true community responsibility until it and its institutions are seen as truly integral parts of the community.

LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS: LESSONS FROM THE UNITED STATES

R. ADAM

In recent decades in many countries, there has been growing pressure to place more power over school decisions in the hands of local people. Because local control is assumed to be more democratic than central or state control, local decision-making has come to be seen by many people as superior in all respects. The United States is usually quoted as a model to be followed by Australia in this matter.

In this paper, it is proposed to provide a brief outline of the American system, and then to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of decentralized decision-making in education, and the lessons which Australia might learn from the American experience.

Local control of schools involves dividing the country up into districts, and then electing or appointing people to manage schools within those districts. How have the Americans carried out these two tasks?

Local School Districts

The United States is divided up into some 17,000 school districts, and the public schools in each of these districts are built, maintained, staffed and controlled by a group of citizens called "the school board".

Unfortunately the school districts were not, in most states, logically planned. They grew haphazardly as the population grew. As a result, there are school districts which contain only one or two schools, and others which contain hundreds of schools. Their boundaries follow no other government divisions: They do not correspond to local government units.

In recent years, most state governments have tried to introduce some logic and order into this chaotic picture by drastically reducing the number of school districts and redrawing their boundaries. This process is still far from complete, and it has been resisted by local groups who fear loss of control over their schools.

If Australia decides to adopt the idea of school districts and school boards, it should draw the boundaries of these districts with great care. The American experience shows how socially divisive districts can be, and what problems can arise from bad divisions of city areas. (Country towns generally have little difficulty: they comprise natural divisions with a school district based in the town and including all the feeder areas around it.)

There is little agreement on the ideal size for a school district. It has been suggested by various authorities that 10,000 students might be an appropriate size for a city district (three or four high schools and their contributing primary schools), but there would obviously be much smaller number in country districts in Australia.

While school districts remain merely collections of schools under the authority of one superintendent (as has been the case so far in Australia), few disputes arise about the boundaries of these districts. When decentralization is taken a step further, however, and these districts raise some of the funds required for their schools, the possibilities for public conflict are increased. Individuals or suburbs find themselves in 'poor' districts while people nearby are in 'rich' districts, and they want boundaries changed. Equilisation policies seldom work well, and inevitably the quality of schools in adjacent districts can vary markedly. Thus the drawing of school district boundaries is a more difficult task than might appear at first glance.

Many observers would agree with Harman (1972, p. 153) that the United States does not provide the best pattern for a decentralised Australian system:

> A better model for Australia to look for in Administrative reform in education would be the English one with relatively large units to decide on questions of high policy and finance, but beneath them smaller authorities and bodies which have sufficient responsibility to ensure that local needs are understood, and to enable local variations to be made within the general framework.

Local School Boards in the United States

The people of the United States have chosen to have most decisions about schools made by local boards. These elected boards are responsible for building and maintaining schools, appointing and controlling teachers, selecting and supervising school programs. Authority to decide these matters is given to boards by the state governments, and some limitations are placed on their decisions by the policies of state and federal governments. In making their decisions, the boards are assisted and guided by professional educators under the leadership of the superintendent of schools. The superintendent has an office staff to help him implement the decisions of the school board.

The number of schools controlled by a single school board varies from one to many hundreds. In some states such as Nebraska, and in rural areas in many states, a board is responsible for only a few schools. In large cities such as Los Angeles, all the schools in a heavily populated region are under the control of a single school board.

Approximately 100,000 American citizens serve on some 17,000 school boards, giving freely of their time and energies in unpaid service to their communities. They are drawn from all levels of society and from all ethnic groups, but studies have revealed that boards tend to be dominated by men from the managerial and professional occupations. Surprisingly women are not well represented on school boards. Less surprisingly, lower income groups are under-represented, (Campbell, 1970, pp. 183-7). Most boards consist of from five to ten members. They generally do not have a close association with political parties: school board elections are most likely to be dominated by pressure group rivalries than by competition among the major political parties.

The motives of people seeking election to American school boards are obviously mixed. Some merely wish to take part in public decision-making, some represent interest groups seeking power over schools, and some use the school boards as stepping stones to political or other public appointments. Teachers, as employees of the boards, are usually barred from membership, and only a scatter of other professional educators seek election to the boards.

The American school board is typically a very public decision-making forum. It meets in public session and individuals or groups may seek to be heard by the board. Sometimes meetings become acrimonious when sensitive issues such as religion or race relations are being discussed.

The superintendent of schools is present at school board meetings to supply information, offer advice, and learn the boards opinion on school matters. Many studies have been made of the relationship between the board and its professional officer, the superintendent (Spring, 1978, pp. 109-111). Most of these studies emphasise the considerable influence which a superintendent can exercise over board decisions by virtue of his or her professional expertise and access to information about the schools being discussed. There is no doubt that in some districts the school board does little more that rubber-stamp the decisions of the superintendent, but in other instances the reverse is true, and the superintendent has almost no power over policies. Securing an appropriate balance between the collective wisdom of the elected representatives and the professional knowledge and experience of the superintendent is seen by many American observers of their school system as one of the most important and difficult educational administration tasks. (Thompson, 1976, p. 44).

In theory, the American school board is responsible for setting broad policies for schools within its district, and for ensuring that these policies are implemented. In theory, the board trusts its chief executive, the superintendent, and leaves all the details of how and when policies should be carried out in the hands of this highly-paid and well-qualified professional officer. In practice, board members often want to go much further than setting policy, and they issue detailed instructions on implementation. Members also become suspicious or resentful towards the superintendent, and make unreasonable demands for detailed reports. Too often, there is an adversary relationship where the board and its superintendent should be working closely together towards the same goals.

American school boards are elected to office by adults in the district who register and then cast their votes. The average turnout of voters is less than 20% of those who are entitled to vote. This is a disappointing figure considering the power over schools which has been delegated to school boards. One cannot avoid the conclusion that a large majority of Americans do not wish to participate in selecting those who manage their schools. The question we should ask ourselves is: Would the percentage be higher in Australia? One can only conclude that given the American tradition of local school boards, and the absence of any such tradition in Australia, citizens in this country would display widespread distinterest in local school board elections.

A second question must therefore be posed: Of what value are such elections if only small percentages of the population participate? Democracy is based on the assumption that all (or most) of the citizens wish to vote. Failure to do so offers an excellent opportunity to organized interest groups to seize and hold control of the government or the authority concerned. Would democracy not be better served in Australia by leaving school control in the hands of state governments which must have a popular mandate because voting is compulsory?

American school boards are often defended as being readily accessible to parents and others interested in schools. Parents living in rural areas in Australia could find this an attractive aspect of the proposal for local control of schools. They must often feel frustrated that they are hundreds of kilometres away from those who are deciding issues about their schools. In many American communities, the accessibility of school board members is an asset. It should be remembered however, that in big cities where one member represents thousands of constituents, he or she may not be more accessible than the local member of an Australian state parliament. Accessibility is not always guaranteed by geographical proximity.

The Political Philosophy of Local Control

In Australia, as in some other countries, the idea of local control of schools has been supported by groups with very different political philosophies. This uneasy coalition includes both Left and Right groups.

Those who fear and detest 'big government' say that schools owned and controlled by local communities would avoid the bureaucracy and inflexibility of the present system. They have great faith in the ability and the willingness of volunteers to manage the affairs of schools. Anarchists and near-anarchists want to abandon central control altogether.

These idealists of the Left find themselves in surprising argeement with some Right-wing groups who also oppose 'big government' and want to reduce the role of public authorities in a wide range of community activities. They believe in private enterprise schools, with parents providing and controlling the schools which their children attend.

The opposing camp which resists the notion of local control of schools also shelters Left and Right groups. The Left are concerned for the poor and disadvantaged, and see the only chance of positive discrimination in their favour coming from a strong central government. Right wing groups are afraid that local control will put schools in the hands of radical pressure groups. They see economy and efficiency in schooling as being more readily secured by state or national governments. They talk of 'economy of scale'.

Australian political parties do not appear to have worked out any thorough and consistent policy towards local control. They regularly express support for the notion of decentralisation, and have published proposals for lessening the power over schools currently exercised by state governments. They have, perhaps understandably, never committed themselves to placing schools completely under the authority of local boards. There appears to be little difference among the major political parties in Australia on this issue.

Outside the formal political groups, or cutting across them, are groups of people who yearn for simpler, less organized life-styles which they believe existed before the industrial revolution. They are earnest supporters of local control of schools. Their viewpoint (in America, at least) is well expressed by Hughes (1970, p. 233):

> "It was a little school, close to the people it served. It was controlled locally by those who had complete confidence in their own vision and skill in management. It was supported locally. It truly belonged to the people it served. The influence of the tradition built up around this little school, the idea of neighbourhood schools, local control of the school, and local support, took a firm hold upon the hearts and minds of all early Americans . . ."

Although Australians have no such tradition of local school control to which they can turn, the idea of local control of schools in this country does have something of the same romanticism, the appeal of rural simplicity, the idea that small is beautiful.

Perhaps the most enthusiastic supporters of local control of schools are the many interest groups to be found in all Western countries. These groups are formed to promote a particular cause which may be the welfare of children or teachers or parents, or a particular set of values, religious, social or political. These groups rightly conclude that their best chance of influencing education decisions will come if schools are controlled by groups of people elected by a small percentage of the total population. There is ample evidence that this has been true in many American school districts. Interest groups are therefore strongly supportive of the notion of decentralised control of education.

Two Pathways to Local Control

Those who aim to arrive at local control of schools have the choice of two pathways: through administrative reform or political change. But the administrative pathway does not go all the way: it eventually joins the political change pathway. In other words, administrative reform can only carry one so far towards local control: then political change becomes inevitable.

The administrative pathway is travelled by moving power from the national government headquarters down through state or regional offices to local education administration offices, and finally to the schools themselves. Federal systems such as Australia or the United States or West Germany started with power at the state or regional level. The Australian states have travelled some distance towards moving decisions about schools to the next level, to regional offices. Some authority has been passed right through to schools.

In practical terms, the movement in Australia cannot go much further unless political change is contemplated. The reason lies in the location of school fund-raising in the national capital. The distance between source of funds and decision-making is too great for accepted notions of public accountability to function. The Federal Government collects most of the taxes in Australia and makes block grants to the states who then spend this

money on schools. While the states continue to plan education budgets and accept responsibility for education spending, no other authority can make significant decisions about schools. This is where Australia is so different from the United States: in America some 50% of school funds are raised and spent by the local school boards.

It may well be argued that Australian schools could be given a large amount of freedom to decide how to spend block grants given to them by state governments. This would imply that they could control salaries and employment conditions of staff. It would imply that they could determine their student numbers and curricular offerings. Would this freedom be acceptable to teachers and to parents? It seems highly unlikely.

When school principals talk about needing more authority, they generally do not mean this kind of power. They are looking for the right to order minor building alterations, buy furniture, make temporary appointments to the teaching staff or support staff without consulting anyone. Most Australian states are moving towards allowing principals this kind of freedom. At present, the move has been slowed by financial stringency rather than by any reluctance to allow more power to pass to the school level.

To summarise, then, Australian school authorities are moving steadily down the pathway of administrative decentralisation which, if sufficient funds are made available, will satisfy most demands from teachers for local decision-making. Those who look to a future in which Australian schools are very different from each other because they are almost independent of central control must face the necessity for radical political change. It will be necessary either to give local authorities some taxing powers (an unlikely development in Australia) or an abandonment of accountability, with block grants to local authorities with more or less complete freedom to spend these grants on schools.

Laymen and Teachers

The relationship between teachers and laymen in education is more complex than appears on the surface. Ranged on one side we have the professional autonomy of teachers, the wisdom of allowing trained personnel to make education decisions, the rights of teachers to control their own working conditions. Arrayed on the other side are the rights of parents to determine the kind of education suited to their children, the need for teachers to be accountable to the public, the desirability of a large measure of uniformity in education within a national community, a uniformity which can only be enforced by governments, and the fact that education is a costly service financed by taxes.

While schooling should obviously be a partnership between parents and teachers, it would be naive to expect the partners to agree all the time. Indeed experience tells us that, in fact, they tend to disagree a great deal. Therefore some rules and guide-lines must be established to indicate who is making what decisions. It is these guide-lines that are at the heart of this discussion of local control of education, for in a central control system, the guide-lines have been set by the political system and are remote from the heat of town or city confromations. But in a local control system, the lines have never been properly defined or they have become blurred.

In a large school system, whether it is that of a state or a large city, a bureaucracy is interposed between the elected decision-maker and those whom the decisions affect. There are directors and superintendents, and a whole array of specialists who implement and interpret the decisions of the politician. Public displeasure (or even pleasure) at school policies tends to focus on the professional or clerical staff. But the decision-maker in a decentralised system is visible and accessible, indeed is often known personally to the parent who wishes to complain. The small numbers of professionals in the local scene are by-passed by those who wish to complain, and may be ignored by those who answer the complaint. Local administration of education must therefore be untidy and somewhat unpredictable. It may have more to do with personalities and emotions than with logic and planning. Some would say this is a good thing: it makes administration human and personal instead of cold and machine-like, and this compensates for occasional inefficiency and uncertainty. Others prefer more regular and rational administration.

Teachers and Local Control of Schools

Teachers' expectations with regard to their work are extremely varied. There are many studies which show that teachers cover quite a wide spectrum of the community in their family backgrounds, their religious and political affiliations, not to mention sex and age differences. It may therefore be assumed that they will vary widely in their attitudes to local control of schools. It may be possible, nevertheless to suggest some points about this subject on which a majority of teachers would agree.

Like other workers, teachers prefer to work in a well-organized, conflict-free situation. They want to be consulted about aspects of their work on which they feel qualified to advise. They expect to have channels for complaint when they are not satisfied with decisions. Organizations representing teachers want machinery which permits regular improvement in salaries and conditions for their members. In judging various kinds of educational administration systems, these are some of the criteria that most teachers would use. They would ask whether a local control system, for example, satisfied these expectations better than a state or national system.

From the viewpoint of the teacher, local control of education has the advantage that he or she is nearer to the decision-makers. Individual representations from a teacher are more likely to be successful in a small administrative unit. The needs or opinions of the individual teacher are likely to be recognized more often in a small system than in a large one.

The disadvantage to the teacher in a small system is that teachers' organizations find their influence greatly diluted when representations have to be made to many small authorities. A single successful application for higher salaries or better conditions can benefit thousands of teachers in a large administrative system. The same battle may have to be fought a hundred times in a decentralised pattern of administration.

There is strength in numbers, and when a handful of teachers seek some education reform, they are seldom successful. When a teachers' organization speaks for thousands of teachers to a single authority, the prospects

of success are very much greater. In short, teachers are stronger in large systems.

Under the impersonality of a large system, teachers may feel that they are treated less sympathetically, but they also feel that they are protected from the whims and fancies of politicians. The local politician, elected to a small school board, often takes the opportunity to act vindictively (or simply ignorantly) against teachers whom he or she dislikes. In a large system, bureaucratic procedures and public scrutiny make personal vendettas almost impossible.

Perhaps the strongest argument for teachers in favour of large administrative units is that the power of the professional administrator is increased in relation to the elected politician. Teachers generally prefer their work and their conditions to be controlled by professional educators: they are suspicious, even resentful of the unpaid amateur who is likely to make education decisions at the local level.

There are other considerations which make most teachers support large administrative units. They prefer, for example, the wider professional opportunities of a large system where promotion does not require transfer to another authority. They like the better in-service courses which larger authorities can provide. They believe that text-books and other resources are better in large administrative units.

Thus while teachers work happily in systems no larger than a single school or a handful of schools, they tend to feel more secure in a large system where their interests are watched over by powerful teachers' organizations, and where established bureaucracies provide stability and wide professional opportunities.

An American authority on educational administration sums up the changing attitudes of American teachers toward local decision-making as follows:

> The greater reliance of teachers on the state is due, in large part, to the limits on the financial resources of local districts and the greater tax base of the states. But teachers have also turned to the state to protect their position from adverse actions of local boards who may more easily apply sanctions. On a statewide basis, teachers have greater strength than they do at the local level, and hence they seek state legislation to protect them . . . (Thompson, 1976, p. 138)

Variety in School Programs

Another objective of local decision-making in education is to produce real variety in school programs, so that schools reflect local cultures, local history and geography, local needs and interests.

While schools do differ somewhat in different parts of the United States, there is less variety than one might expect from a decentralized system, probable not much more than one would find in Australia. This suggests that forces more powerful than the administrative system determine the diversity of schools. No Australian can be unaware of the pervasive force of American culture conveyed by a busy publishing industry and the

hpnotic television set. This force bears down strongly on American schools, forcing them into national rather than local patterns.

The nervous mobility of Americans is another factor which reinforces national patterns in the schools. American parents, constantly moving from district to district and state to state, are not enthusiastic about school programs which are only relevant to one district or one state. They want an educational currency which is acceptable wherever their children go, 'from sea to shining sea'. School boards which venture on a distinctive Arizona or even Tucson curriculum are constantly under attack from those who expect next year to be in Baltimore or Miami.

Those who see increased local control of education in Australia as a way of increasing diversity of curricula should be aware of very strong parental pressure for uniformity in school programs. Educators looking to greater diversity could be disappointed, as many American educators have been disappointed to find themselves over-ruled when local authorities have copied national programs in the various school subjects. The fear of being out-of-step with current trends, the need for economy in purchasing textbooks, and pressures from young parents constantly moving their homes, all these factors have turned local authorities away from curriculum experiment and diversity. In short, local control of schools is not a guarantee of varied school programs.

As a footnote to these comments on the relationship between diversity in school programs and local control of education, it may be worth observing that many nations throughout the world see no virtue in such diversity. The Soviet Union, France and Japan come immediately to mind as governments which prescribe curricula to be followed in all public schools. They believe that the design of school programs requires the full attention of the nation's best educators, and that children everywhere should benefit from their expertise. They are opposed on principle to the notion of local control of curricula. Australians therefore, should not only decide whether local control of schools would indeed diversify school programs, but even whether they want this diversification, keeping in mind that many leading industrial nations have rejected the idea.

Lessons for Australia

Obviously local decision-making about schools can assume many shapes. Decisions can be in the hands of teachers, administrators, parents, local government, or some combination of these groups. Every country throughout the world permits some decisions about schools to be made locally; differences among countries are in the extent of these decisions and the people who make them.

In some countries, detailed directives about a wide variety of school matters are issued from the national ministry of education. Local citizens have virtually no voice in education policies, and school principals are left with very little freedom to decide anything about their schools. In other countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, central and regional governments exercise minimal control over school matters, leaving local citizens and school principals a large measure of freedom. Australia

is somewhere between these two extremes, its location on the spectrum depending on the state governments policies, and the interpretation of the observer.

As already indicated, administrative decentralisation has been proceeding in most states for some years, and this has lessened some of the remoteness and harshness of rule from state capitals. Most Australian parents and teachers will soon be geographically close to a senior administrative officer who should be able to deal with interpretation of policies, handle complaints, and influence policy formation to some degree.

For those Australians who wish to be actively involved in making decisions about local schools, the future is less certain. Attempts to organize school councils do not seem to have been very successful, and this is hardly surprising. Such councils need a reasonable amount of political and economic autonomy if they are to have meaningful discussions. Australian governments have not been so willing to provide much autonomy for local bodies. Perhaps they are right in taking this attitude. The Australian political climate may simply not be suitable for such a development.

There would be widespread support for the idea that decisions about schools should ideally be made as close as possible to the schools. People most knowledgeable about local conditions and people most affected by the decisions should be able to influence them.

Support for increased local control tends to diminish, however, when certain aspects of the American experience are mentioned. Local control inevitable means different qualities of schooling in different areas: equality of educational opportunity is greatest when uniform schools programs are devised and staffed by a central authority. In the United States, very large gaps have opened up between the wealthy and the poor school districts.

Another unfortunate aspects of the American school board system has been the limited participation of local citizens. Poor voter turnouts, rejected bond issues, lack of support for school boards and excessive influence from pressure groups have tarnished the democratic image of the system.

However committed to the system, American teachers constantly complain about the problems they encounter in dealing with 17,000 school boards. It would seem that teachers have much to gain and little to lose by working in larger rather than smaller education systems. Negotiations about salaries and conditions, opportunities for promotion, protection from undue pressure from interest groups, and generally better finance for schools seem more easily handled in larger systems.

The suggestion that local control of schools leads to a desirable diversity in school programs has been discussed, and American experience in this matter certainly suggests that there is little more diversity in the United States than in other countries where local authorities do not concern themselves with curricula.

Australians find it easy to accept the reasons which Americans give for seeking local decision-making for schools, but are less enthusiastic when they observe the problems which one finds everywhere in the American system of school administration. While the present Australian system often

seems remote, unfeeling, inflexible and unable to use local interests and talents, it has other desirable qualities such as reasonable equality of opportunity for students, acceptable security for teachers, and financial stability. It may be that there are only marginal improvements which can be made to the Australian system without sacrificing these qualities. It may also be that the Australian system is so closely interwoven with our other political and governmental institutions that the Australian people will not permit any major change in patterns of school government.

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VICTORIAN DEVELOPMENTS IN LEVELS OF DECISION-MAKING

K. COLLINS

The present practice and atttitude of the Victorian Education Department is to encourage and initiate the devolution of decision-making to the school level, where possible and appropriate.

The significant structural provision to implement this policy was the Education (School Council) Act 1975. The legislative framework for Schools Councils can be seen to open the way to co-operative effort, self-help and public accountability. The general unprescriptive character of much of the legislation should be recognised. The influence and benefit to be derived from people working together in and around schools will depend less on direction and prescription that we have come to expect. When enacted the Director-General of Education, Dr. Shears, viewed the legislation as "part of the total restructuring of the Education Department of Victoria at the central, regional and school levels which (had) been proceeding during the 1970's" (New Exchange 7/7/1976).

More recently, whilst introducing the Education (Amendment) Bill 1979, the Assistant Minister of Education, Mr Lacy, reaffirmed "commitment . . . to the continuing devolution of powers to school councils and to the encouragement of the community in its direct participation with education" (Extract from the Victoria Parliamentary Debates — Education (Amendment) Bill: Explanatory Second Reading Speech: The Hon. Norman Lacy, M.P. 29 November 1979). In the explanatory Second Reading Speech, the Assistant Minister highlighted the dramatic increase in the role and the prerogatives of the community in respect of the education process since the Education (School Councils) and Youth, Sport and Recreation Acts of only five years ago.

In the past, the provision of schooling in Australia depended on systems of centralised decision-making. The validity of such methods of organisation was not questioned then and is not questioned now. In order to meet the needs of all children in geographically diverse locations and to accommodate a quickly expanding school population, it was determined that centralised systems of educational decision-making were the most efficient and equitable.

The social context in which schools operate has changed dramatically in the last thirty years and more rapidly in the last ten. A multi-cultural society is a reality; conflicts of interest and values, not new in themselves, are more widely known and expressed and schools can no longer confidently assert a single perspective on the world or a single view of the good life.

These differences raise questions about the purposes of schooling. The questions challenge the traditional justification for selection of the content of a school's curriculum and the process and authority structure upon which they are based. Justifications for schooling and an examination of the

processes and authority structures of schools will be explored throughout this paper and will provide the framework for the consideration of the development of levels of decision-making in the Victorian state system of education.

In tracing the development of decision-making in Victoria, it is necessary to include a consideration of the educational and, to some extent, political philosophical base for the development of the movement. It is within such a framework that developments can best be described and critically analysed and it also provides a means by which to examine the constraints which have, or continue, to impede further development.

The rightness and/or persuasiveness of arguments giving schools more responsibility for their educational programs are strong, many and well documented.

The arguments support the need for schools to be tuned to local expectations, recognise the positive role of teachers and highlight the professional responsibility of the notion of accountability to client. Central to yet another of the arguments in an acknowledgement that school facilities can be used to advantage in the provision of continuing education services, especially if such services are based on locally identified needs. Finally, increased economic efficiency and, most importantly, improved educational quality will result from giving participants the responsibility for what happens in schools. (For a detailed presentation of these arguments see *"School Boards in the A.C.T. in School and Community Project, School of Education 1977, pp. 1-2*).

I wish to develop further the association of parental influence on the child's educational attainment as a reason for greater parental participation in school decision-making since I believe that a clear understanding of this educational argument will help us to acknowledge who is the educational client and also assist us in understanding the rationale for shared decision-making.

The importance of home background and parent support for the success in educational achievement gained prominence, partly as the result of major international studies. This research revealed that non-school factors may, in fact, be more important determinants of educational outcomes that school factors.

There is a high positive correlation between the educational attainment and occupational achievement of the father determined by the status of the job, and the income it produces. Similarly, there is a high positive correlation between father's achievement and the educational achievements and aspirations of his children. Thus scholastic aptitude, or what is commonly called "academic aptitude", has been found to be positively related to an individual socio-economic status. Students from high socio-economic status backgrounds have considerably higher vocational and educational aspirations compared with students who have low socio-economic status backgrounds. (Bachman 1970, Flanagan 1964).

Many studies have examined the role of home environment factors in the attainment of educational outcomes concentrating on the status of the

home using a combination of structural, process and attitudinal variables. Douglas (1964, 1968) The Plowden Report (1967) Coleman (1966) and Project Talent (1967) are examples of research which have established the highly significant correlations between measures of socio-economic status, attitudes to education, processes in the home and achievement of the child in the school situation. Coleman reported (1967 p. 325) "that schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context".

Australian research during the past eleven years has emphasised home influence on school performance and achievement.

The Home Environment and School Study undertaken by Keeves (1972, 1974) examined the ways in which characteristics of the educational environment of the home, the school and the peer group accounted for school performance and for change in achievement over time. Although Keeves is cautious in reporting the relationship of home environment and achievement he concluded in 1974 that the attitudes and ambitions of parents contributed to the final level of achievement in mathematics and science and that home practices, including relationships between the home and the school, influenced achievement in science.

Rosier (1973) found in a study involving a group of fourteen year-old students from 221 schools throughout Australia that ten factors accounted for 68% of the variance between the school science scores, with the home background factor (father's occupation, parents' education and literacy of the home) being predominant.

In reporting the result of a longitudinal study of the progression through state high schools of 1000 N.S.W. students, Moore (1973 p. 22) states that:

> "When home based educational objectives clash with school based objectives the student normally resolves the conflict by rejecting school. The key figures in this whole dynamic social complex are the parents . . . it is the parents who reject or accept school values".

Again, the emphasis on home influence is confirmed by Edgar as recently as last year when he stated that "compared with home, personality and opportunity structures, educational research suggests that schools have minimal impact."

Beare (1974, p. 10) has interpreted the data to suggest that parental participation improves school attendance, encourages children to study better and help children acquire basic skills more quickly.

Whilst it is true that "educational supportiveness" of the home is embedded in much of the research cited above, it is not legitimate to conclude that the lesser educational opportunities of lower socio-economic status children are caused by the inadequacies of their home environment — the deficit argument.

Nor does it follow from the research evidence reported here that schools do not make a difference.

Teachers must, by their actions, acknowledge the significance of family influence and show that they value the contribution parental participation

can have during a child's stay at school. To deny the conclusions of the research data — that is to deny the significance of family influence on the child's educational attainment, is to deny the child the opportunity to maximise the benefits of schooling.

I do not wish to argue that schools alone can bring about a more equal and mobile society, but as Jean Blackburn asserts "schools, for whatever reasons . . . have short-changed children in particular social groups (1974, p. 57). There is a strong link between 'power over life circumstances' and the 'special competencies which schooling is designed to build' and as the Schools Commission Report (1975, p. 8) underlines —

> "if schooling as it is presently experienced . . . cannot assist children to such competencies, that is a case for testing more radically different alternatives, not for abandoning the effort!"

That some question the existence of school as an institution, does not mean that it is dead. Rather, it reflects the changing and increasingly contradictory demands society now makes of schools.

So, I believe that the research data offered here serves to clearly identify the equally important role of both parents and teachers, since both responsible adult groups are directly affected by the decisions made in schools.

The data also serves to identify parents as the co-client of the school. As you are aware, elements characteristic of professional service include responsiveness to the client and accountability to the client. Establishing who the client is makes easier the task of identifying lines of responsibility. In terms of our own organisation the Minister for Education, Mr Hunt, has identified the 'service-orientation' of the schooling system. In a Ministerial statement on disruption in technical schools Mr Hunt noted (1979) "teachers are employed solely to serve the interests of the students and to assist in their development."

The framework of political accountability within which schools operate involves external supervision which will remain even though it will be exercised in more of an advisory rather than judgmental capacity. What is being expanded is the degree of adaptability within general frameworks, on the assumption that people able to make their own decisions are likely to act more responsibly and have a stronger commitment to the success of the enterprise in which they are engaged, than are those who see themselves merely as instruments of the will of others.

Over the past decade, some devolution of responsibility has taken place, but in the absence of such bodies as local school boards operating at district level, the devolution has been, broadly speaking, of a professional nature. As a result, principals and teachers have more authority and freedom than their counterparts in any part of the world.

Individual school councils are seen to provide a new accountability device compensating for the weakening of Ministerial control which has occurred through devolution of responsibility but in so doing takes professional control further than has been done in most other countries.

Whilst involvement and participation in school community decision making has much to offer contemporary education, it ought to be acknowledged that it is not an instant panacea for the relief of all, or even most, problems facing to-day's schools.

Firstly, there is the observation that many parents quite clearly see themselves as aiding the teacher, who is the expert, in the work of teaching. There are many who show no great enthusiasm to participate in school at the management level even though many do involve themselves with the activities of the school. (Stamp, 1975, 167).

Fitzgerald (1975, p. 14) has noted that "relatively few parents in Australia share any strong desire to become actively involved in the running of schools. This lack of interest seems especially true of working class families". Similar results were reported by Adams and Lloyd-Wright (1975) in their pilot study of actual and potential school involvement — the majority of the community, especially those in lower income groups, were apathetic towards actually participating in schools.

Henry (1977, p. 11) reports that in the Hills Education Study Groups (King and Watson, 1976) where 2800 parents in the Pennant Hills area of Sydney were surveyed, there was strong opinion among parents that school management and day-to-day classroom activities should be left to teachers and, although more parents wished to be involved in more than traditional fund-raising, they were uncertain of the opportunities in which it was possible for them to become further involved.

Lack of Interest? I prefer to support the view clearly stated in the Victorian Federation of State Schools Parents Clubs' submission to the Ministerial Review of Education Policies in November 1979 which asserts that "all parents are interested in their child's progress, except for the few who are prevented from offering their children support through poverty, emotional stress, lack of family support or (the) inability to handle society's institutions". Opportunities for participation and potential to participate must be distinguished from lack of interest and apathy.

It would do well for us to remember that apathy is closely associated with lack of power. The traditional or 'fortress' model of schools in respect of community involvement, where the learning process is limited to teachers and students within the school (Claydon, 1975, pp. 3-16), rejects that parents have an other than superficial or, at best, peripheral role. Such schools may have a policy of 'parents are welcome to talk about their children at any time' and may even make time available for parent interviews, but the hidden message is negative, and more powerful, if only because it is often closer to the parents' own experience of school. (Schools Commission: Report for the Triennium 1976-1978, June 1975, p. 113).

Apathy is reduced in direct proportion to the amount of real power given. Overseas experience indicates that local influence becomes significant only when participatory structures are linked with effective control over resources and political power. (Smith, 1971, vol. 31, no. 6).

It is therefore possible to avoid using citizen apathy as a factor operating against the success of the devolution movement vis-a-vis School Council development.

However, it could be considered that reluctance of some professionals to accept citizen involvement may be matched by an over-estimation of parental dissatisfaction with the manner in which the Education Department 'delivers', by professionals within the Department. But, more importantly, the realities of social and economic life in an industrialised society where there is high mobility of population, separation of home and work place, specialisation, both parents working and competing demands on time create a situation where some parents are prepared to cede authority in many areas to the paid professional.

Thus, despite school council developments since 1975, there is still much to be done to realise the maximum potential of school council legislation. The problem is one of increasing public access to education and involving citizens in vital decisions relating to finance, curriculum, building and staffing provision without undermining the legitimate responsibility of either the professional or the Minister, representing the Crown.

Arguments sometimes offered to prevent, reduce or delay effective control of resources at the local level include propositions relating to school diversity, reconciliation of local and national interest and teacher power. One of the over-riding characteristics of primary schools in Victoria is their diversity. The following figures illustrate this diversity in terms of size alone:

1 and 2 teachers schools	607
50 — 200 pupils	324
200 — 400 pupils	404
Above 400 pupils	382

As I said earlier, the system was originally established to ensure equality of educational provision and resource allocation in a broad range of conditions and circumstances, and the fundamental nature of the operation has not changed. Ministerial control in Victoria has been a strength in the equitable distribution of State resources in funds and personnel for the provision of uniformally sound basic education to the most remote parts of the State and for the maintenance of a teaching service that gives career prospects to all teachers, irrespective of the geographical location of the school or the socio-economic level of the community.

A second argument, sometimes used to delay increased devolution of decision making to schools relates to the supposed difficulty of reconciling educational policy formulated by teachers and parents at the local level, with attempts, at broader educational levels to develop universal norms or standards. This argument is usually used in the name of mobility and equal educational opportunity and outcome for all children. Rather than assuming the mutual exclusiveness of both efforts I believe it more appropriate to perceive these efforts as mutually supportive.

Thirdly, there is an expressed concern in the general discussion concerning devolution of decision-making, and therefore devolution of responsibility, that parental involvement has the potential for clashing head-on with another school phenomena of recent decades — teacher power. Teachers too want more say in how schools should be run. In this struggle

for power where do parents fit in? Can ways be found to reconcile and harmonise the potentially conflicting demands and desires of the different groups? (Stamp, 1975, p. 167).

First, since school-based decision making implies that each separate school constitutes the unit of analysis and planning, the focus of schooling is narrowed; duplication, waste and inefficiency are encouraged, broader-sharing of school facilities, specialist teachers and curriculum choices across whole areas is avoided and the resources pool is restricted to local parents and teachers. (Edgar, 1979, p. 62).

This is not an argument for centralist control but rather a challenge for those with a central concern in schooling to find alternative approaches aimed at creating total community competence.

Area-wide approaches to planning may well be one such positive alternative. Since there is difficulty in agreeing about the meaning of community — sociological definitions usually stress geographic area, social interaction and/or common ties (Henry, 1977, p. 9) — the Victorian Country Education Project has defined community as the "school-related" group. Its participants contend that by thinking in terms of 'areas' education be seen as a total effort; that by encouraging community wide participation rather than only local school involvement, wider horizons will open; that cost of efficiency, teacher development and exchange of ideas and skills will more readily flow. (Edgar 1979, p. 65).

Secondly, that devolving power through formal structures preserves the "basic hierarchy of presently existing institutions and leaves the present system intact" if all that devolution means is a few participants with organisational skills and talents determining policy, program and action for others.

In fact, a further extension of this proposition suggests that it is possible to:

> "develop competence and decision-making skills in members of committees and rest safely in the thought that they, in turn, will block the involvement of others. Their new skills, know-how, sense of power will make them feel like new born experts, keen for participation until they have to give power and authority over to others who are now, in contrast to themselves, by definition not expert enough or responsible enough to be given it" (Edgar 1979, p. 60).

Thirdly, even when it is argued that there is a need to establish power structures in schools and in the education system in general, consistent with the best of liberal democratic philosophy, it is important to avoid the trap of perceiving collective control over decision-making as an end in itself. We must also be concerned with the implications of whatever the collectivity defines as important "Power to do what, for whom and why are vitally important and do not disappear when democratic participation has been achieved". (Sharp 1976).

Finally, whilst participatory school democracy embodies, by definition, the concept of power sharing, there is no mandatory obligation to partici-

pate. However, not wanting to participate ought not be confused with being unable to participate because the school makes it difficult to do otherwise. Parents must feel welcome and must be seen to be co-partners in the education of their children. (School Community Based Decision Making: Report of Second National Conference 1979, p. 23).

It should also be remembered that even those parents who deliberately choose not to participate because they are presently satisfied with the direction and activities of their school, will, nevertheless, sometimes "need structures that allow them to participate when (and if) situations change or when controversial issues arise that require conflicting views to be accommodated". (School Community Based Decision Making: Report of Second National Conference, 1979, p. 23) For this reason, therefore, neither teachers nor other actively involved parents can afford to disregard or ignore such members of their school community.

A consideration of the arguments and conceptual propositions outlined here serves to remind us that since a student's success at school is largely dependent on home background; on parent satisfaction with the school as parents perceive it; and parents reinforcement of the school's aims and active assistance in achieving those aims, it is crucial that school authorities (including central administrators) acknowledge the importance of parental influence and indicate their preparedness to accept parents as equal partners in the educative process. Parents should be assisted by the overt action and positive attitude of professional educators and through the continued development of formal mechanisms at legislative level, to feel that they have a contribution — that their participation in partnership with teachers will positively contribute to effective learning outcomes and increase both pupil, parent and teacher competence.

What else can schools do?

From his experience of research projects involving parents, Anthony Wood (1974, pp. 39-45) suggests an action-orientation strategy. His model moves through four processes — from an observational (open days, recreation displays, concerts) to an instructional (parent-teacher interviews, newsletters, demonstrations, workshops) to a practical (parent help during school hours — classroom aides) to the formal level of planning and organisation with the promotion of participation in parent-teacher curriculum committees.

What this model reflects is what our own experience supports — that practical problem-solving activities are more helpful in developing understanding and promoting co-operative action than first up theoretical discussions. (McCormack — Proposals for Vocational Guidance — St. Leo's College, Box Hill, Victoria).

As Kirner (1976) observes:

> "Many schools in Victoria have schemes which amply illustrate the improvements in student attitude and achievement, parent interest, confidence and competence and teacher satisfaction resulting from parents and teachers working together up Wood's ladder of curricu-

lum involvement. The challenge for the school administrator is to discover, show confidence and support initiatives which will make participation work in a particular school community".

Like all other groups endowed with power, principals and teachers have an obvious vested interest in maintaining their present position — which in many instances means, monopoly of decision-making in schools.

Teachers and school administrators must be assisted and supported to understand that decision-making which incorporates the wider community is not a threat to their professional status. However, it will require of principals and teachers that they reconstruct their understanding of their role — that is, they will need to perceive themselves as fulfilling a facilitating and servicing function in which their training, knowledge and expertise can be used in a way that will assist in developing the "partnership relationship" with parents so important in the promotion of positive child learning and development. (Report of Second National Conference on School Community Based Decision Making 1979, pp. 19-20).

Such a changed teacher perception would also encourage a rejection of the view, unfortunately still held by some teachers, that 'parents have kids, teachers save them'. It is long since time that benevolent paternalism of the child-saving movement originating in the 19th century be forgotten.

Whilst it is necessary for teachers to re-orient their perceptions of their role in order to accommodate changing school structures, it is also important to avoid 'blaming the victim' — in this case the classroom teacher who so often quite unfairly bears the brunt of community dissatisfaction with a particular educational practice. It is crucial that both principals and other senior administrators promote teachers' talents and maximise teacher skills. Teachers have much to offer and they must be convinced of their professional and community usefulness. This is particularly so when, as in the case of the Victorian State primary teaching service, 66.9% of teachers are under 35 years of age. Positive systemic and community support will make it unnecessary for teachers to feel the need to retreat behind the protective shell of close-shop professionalism'. (Report of Second National Conference on School Community Based Decision Making 1979, pp. 19-20).

Unfortunately, the model of professionalism aspired to and assumed by many teachers is characterised by the insular, the exclusive and the non-dynamic. If professionalism is to be considered, it should be based on a model which acknowledges the diffuse and changing role assigned to teaching, one that recognises that the teacher's role is tied to changing societal expectations and one that identifies the public nature of teaching. It is important that teachers avoid the social and psychological 'distancing' so often associated with the close-knit, mystic elitism of traditional professionalism.

If parents are to be accepted as equal partners, as teachers we would do well to address ourselves to an issue often forgotten — Who is best qualified to decide the best interests of the child? Rather than, what is in the best interests of the child? (Coons & Sugarman, 1978, p. 223) In usurping authority to make decisions on behalf of parents on the basis of our assumed

competence, especially in respect of curriculum and school structures, we may have denied parents their "right to decipher the needs, interests and educational pathways best suited to their children. (Edgar 1979, p. 65).

With the influences for change strong and multi-faceted, what must not occur is a feeling by teachers themselves that they are confronted with impossible and conflicting demands. Teachers must be able to feel that they can be agents for change, that they have the power and authority to influence change, both in school organisation and curriculum. We have not yet made the most of the present freedoms we have — especially in curriculum.

As I have indicated elsewhere in this presentation, it is generally accepted that those involved within schools are more likely to be motivated to seek effective paths to learning for children for whom they are responsible if it is clearly accepted that responsibility for the quality of educational experience and their learning activities rests with those same people involved in the actual task of schooling in consultation with the parents of the children they teach.

There is further support for the devolutionary movement in the state of educational theory itself. There is no unified body of educational theory from which conclusions can be drawn which apply equally in all circumstances, especially when the circumstances are largely determined by the human being involved.

This is why there is and always has been a wide disillusionment with centrally directed changes designed to improve the effectiveness of teachers.

This has tremendous in-school implications.

Schools have, by and large, an isolated and individualistic organisation of teaching within segregated classrooms which leaves teachers alone with a large degree of uncertainty about their effectiveness and with limited support in evaluating the effects of the processes they are operating and making changes informed by that evaluation. Unless schools can be assisted to develop as institutions characterised by an atmosphere of mutual support and be assisted to overcome attitudes of defensive isolationism disillusionment with the central authority will persist. (Report of Second National Conference on School Community Decision-Making (1979, pp. 19-20)).

What does the Victorian Authority see as its role, and what has it done to demonstrate its commitment to devolution of decision-making?

I am of the opinion that the main function of those not directly involved in the service of teaching is to support those who do. (For a full discussion of this point see Amita Etzioni: "Authority Structure and Organisational Effectiveness", Administrative Science Quarterly 1959, 4, pp. 43-67). It is the responsibility of the central administrative authority to assist schools to accept responsibility (particularly responsibility for curriculum decision-making) and once accepted to support schools in what they do. Whilst the system of primary education which has operated in Victoria for over a century has fostered equity and aimed at a professional efficient, stable

and co-ordinated service, it has unfortunately, at the same time, promoted a closed system, and to many, a controlling system.

It cannot be denied that the 'top-down' model of the centralist tradition creates and/or compounds tensions resulting in an unnecessary 'distancing' of itself from those for whom the service is intended. It is important to aim at a structural evolution supporting, wherever possible, participatory management and responsibility at the school level.

The devolution of shared decision-making to schools through formal structures was initiated in Victoria in 1973. Changes in formal devolution were associated, as Petit (1978, p. 8) observes, with the desire to "develop uniform and expanded responsibilities for school councils in the areas of management, community education and recreation and with the need for formal accountability for public funds."

These initiatives arose amid heightened public and political awareness of concepts associated with equality and diversity as articulated in the Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (Karmel Report) 1973.

During this time parent and teacher activities reached a new level of organisation. Letters, telegrams, advertisements, press releases and lobbying were all part of the strong pressure applied in support of the report. The Australian Teachers' Federation and the Australian Council of State School Organisations, particularly the latter, played a considerable and significant part in the passage of the Schools Commission Bill and the State Grants (schools) Bill presented to the Australian Parliament in the Spring session of 1973. Both Bills embodied the recommendations of the Karmel Report (Bessant and Spaul, 1976, pp. 127-128).

At approximately the same time, the Victorian Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation was seeking ways to facilitate the use of schools for community education and the Victorian Council of State School Organisations (VICCSO) had produced a document for VICCSO Conference in September 1973 entitled "A Statement of Principles Relating to Schools Councils" which documented the ways in which school council could be made more effective.

In October 1973, the Director-General of Education in Victoria, Dr. Shears, called a meeting to discuss community use of schools. In November of the same year, a memorandum was forwarded from the Director-General's office to principals and staff of all schools with copies of the letter and attached paper to be made available to the school council or committee and any other parent organisations associated with each school. The paper entitled "Some Thoughts on The Community and The School" distinguished the administrative and educational functions of the school and recommended that:

> "the administrative and educational aspects of school management should be provided for by the development of the powers and functions of School Councils and the establishment of School Education Committees' (p. 2).

Other recommendations included the consideration of the composition, powers and duties of School Council (pp. 3-4).

Schools were invited to discuss the recommendations and let principal, teachers and parent organisations, community groups and the Education Department know their views.

Negotiation at the systemic and local school level with respect to the composition of future school councils took place during 1974 and 1975. In 1976 the Education Department (Amendment) Regulations were signed by the Governor-in-Council. These regulations set out the procedures necessary to implement the Education (School Councils) Act.

In Victoria, it is the duty of the school council:

> "to advise the principal and staff on the general education policy of the schools, to ensure that buildings and grounds are kept in good condition, make recommendations for replacement, extension, alteration and general improvements of buildings and grounds; to enter into contract for and/or construct buildings with Ministerial approval, to ensure that school funds are used for proper purposes and arrange for annual audit; to conduct general educational activities for the local community and authorise the use of the school grounds and buildings under conditions they may consider desirable to generally stimulate interest in the school; to employ non-teaching staff, part-time staff for special subjects and community education and teacher aides; to arrange cleaning and carry out any other prescribed duties."

As Ian Spalding (Planning Services) notes —

Where there was once a single line of responsibility stretching from a central Department to the school through the principal, there is now a second link between the Department and the school through the Council as an agent of the Crown. This means that a partnership has to be forged between the Council and the school's senior executive officer and other staff. The kind of partnership and influence to emerge at each school will depend on the personalities and the resources available. Eventually one supposes an overall pattern will develop. Its outlines will be determined rather less by prescription and structure than by leadership and the ebb and flow of events at a particular school. (Part of an address given at Knox Region School Councils' Seminar 1977).

To assist in identifying the means through which it has been possible to make decisions collectively at decentralised and school levels in significant areas and, at the same time, ensure an equitable distribution of resources, rationalisation of provision of facilities, continuity of curriculum offering, comparability of staffing allocations and teaching conditions, and an avoidance of competition between various school types in resource allocation, I will briefly describe, even at the risk of being charged with parochialism, the structural provision and strategies adopted by the Victorian State Primary Directorate to ensure its task — that of dicharging Ministerial responsibility for the operation of primary schools — is achieved.

Apart from the development of inspectorates designed to act as decentralised agencies for the directorate, central to the Division's structural design is the school staff, itself, whose numbers and composition are

determined by pupil enrolment and by community-type and curriculum program needs with teacher appointment determined by a committee of classifiers on the basis of seniority, qualifications and suitability.

Networks of curriculum committees at central and local levels, district and regional in-service and accommodation and facilities committees, and a system of support staff — advisers and consultants — assigned to specified curriculum areas at inspectorate level collectively and/or individually support the schooling process structural organisation initiated by the central authority and the now established school council provision is aimed at accommodating and responding to the changing needs of individual school communities.

Strategically, the directorate is committed to encouraging parental participation and involvement in school activities of all kinds, within the classroom and without, especially as parental expectation and advice reflect upon curriculum planning. Parental representation is sought in the review of schools and school councils are perceived as the agents of facilities supervision and of the distribution of additional funds for curriculum activities.

To identify the effects of changed approaches I now propose to examine areas fundamentally linked with vital decisions and effective control of resources. That is, decisions which directly relate to curriculum, staffing, finance and buildings and facilities.

The role of the central authority in respect of curriculum is seen as providing teachers and schools with information about curriculum, policy, program and activities which will enable them to make effective decisions; providing schools and teachers with curriculum materials which can be used in implementing those decisions; and finally providing opportunities for the in-service training and development of teachers in the skills and knowledge required. (The Primary School Curriculum: A Manual for Victorian Schools 1979, p. 4).

The initiative taken by the central authority to develop the primary school curriculum manual, prepared by the Curriculum Project Team (Primary) and published in late 1979, entitled 'The Primary School Curriculum: A Manual for Victorian Schools', is aimed at assisting teachers, principals and parents in making those decisions which see the school's curriculum progressively developed as learning experiences for children. It provides a model which shows the relationships between the broad outlines of a school's aims, values and general operating principles, the curriculum programs selected and adapted for the school's use and the class lessons and activities devised by the teachers. Responsibilities are clearly indicated and the processes which may be used to arrive at the best curriculum decisions are explored.

Central support in respect of curriculum materials is mainly through the provision of courses of study and curriculum guides aimed at assisting those in schools to be guided by advances in the fields of curriculum, child development and learning. At the school level, teachers are required to make their own curriculum decisions about lesson planning and course development, evaluation strategies and reporting procedures in consultation with parents.

The Curriculum Services Enquiry, established by the Director-General of Education, Dr. Shears in 1976, reported a stance supportive of school-based decision-making and said in principle, that schools are responsible for the total curriculum. The enquiry recognised, however, that schools would need support in developing the elements which comprise it and efforts will be continued to provide curriculum guidelines from which schools may select or adapt.

The Report also postulated that in the provision of curriculum services through consultants that such personnel must be based as close to the schools as possible. Within the Primary Division there are now 300 consultants deployed throughout the State working within districts or groups of schools.

For many years, the term "curriculum" has been equated with the content of what is taught in schools. Elements of this definition still persist as it is still common to refer to the 'mathematics curriculum', and 'language curriculum', and so on. But educators now define the work so that it embraces all learner experience in or connected with schools. It is the program used by the school as a means of accomplishing its purpose.

The traditional distinctions between the content of education and the processes of teaching are now blurred; the drawing of lines between curricula and extra-curricula activities is futile, the old equation of curriculum with syllabus tend to be rejected by the advocates of the broader concept of curriculum.

This must be the starting point of our discussion about the role of School Council in curriculum determination. The role of the Council in the total life of the school community is a much broader concept than the concept of the teaching-learning areas alone.

I personally do not have much difficulty with the broader view of curriculum which now prevails among curriculum theorists, but could be less prevalent amongst parents. The view expresses a proper concern for those aspects of schooling which have as great an educational potential as orthodox subjects in the school syllabus. The quality of the learning experience available, the school as a community, and a broad view of the subject as a form of knowledge and experience (rather than a collection of facts) are now included.

Difficulty, however, may exist in the actual expression of the broader concern within the framework of orthodox schools as we know them, which indicates the necessity for new attitudes and the establishment of 'new-look' institutions with new programs to implement this totality of curriculum concept.

This is what we are talking about when we use the term 'school based curriculum' but here too, there is a tendency to use this term in its narrow connotation. The true concept of school based curriculum is concerned with totality of the school within the community.

This is why there is recognition in the School Councils' legislation that a school should reflect the education aspirations of the community in which

it is placed through the School Council concerned. Councils have a rightful place in the determination of what should transpire in the total life of the school community.

However, until we make progress in identifying the implications of the progression of the new curriculum thinking into school life along the new directions inherent in it (together with the definition of any associated problems within an action framework), we can expect confusion and uncertainity, both in the public and professionad mind.

What we have to do is to determine the parameters of the curriculum field, identify the key concepts in it, relate them to one another, and also systematically relate them to those concepts in the field of action to which they refer. Unless this is done, the whole notion of school based curriculum, of which the School Council responsibility is a part, is likely to degenerate into empty debate on the one hand and aimless and arbitrary decision making, at the local level, on the other. Barriers will continue to be thrown up in a situation where barriers have no place. To achieve this sorting out process within the processes of change will require a concerted effort from everyone concerned in education.

It could not be claimed, despite the developments which have no place in Victoria and even though they may compare most favourably with what has happened elsewhere in Australia, that the Education Department has done everything it can or everything it should do in relation to the concept of the devolution of responsibility to which it is committed. I do believe, however, that if the Department adheres to the attitudes within the curriculum concept which I have expressed, the administration must surely take a supportive role rather than exercise a controlling function. (Collins 1978, p. 1).

With respect to staffing the central educational authority can claim overall equity maintenance in the allocation of staff to primary schools and, some steps, towards meeting disparate needs have also been taken.

At the same time, one must concede that there is some incompatibility between the idea of schools developing their own philosophies and a centralised staffing arrangement which provides staff for schools as though they were all exactly the same.

During 1979 and 1980, several modifications to the staffing of primary schools have been introduced. These include the introduction of school staffing on a "total establishment" basis — that is, the total number of teachers provided by the Education Department; the provision of additional teachers to meet the requirements of schools with special needs with a more refined basis of allocation; the choice at school level, of specialist teachers necessary to implement locally devised school policy; modification to the role of specialist staff within schools to allow an increased degree of flexibility of school operation; the introduction of a revised staffing schedule which lowers considerably the number of pupils required within the various school classifications; an increase in the number of senior positions within schools and a more even spread of such positions across schools; improved pupil-teacher ratios and improvement to advisory and consultancy services

available to schools. It should be emphasised that total responsibility for the efficient use of the staffing resource is deliberately and properly based at the school level.

These changes have been introduced to effect maximum flexibility of school operations so that individual school conditions and locally defined aspirations may be realistically met. The changes are also designed to improve the quality of educational experience for all children with the expectation of securing improved levels of pupil achievement.

Increasing amounts of money are being channelled directly to schools by means of grants for their discretionary spending. The budget for the Primary Schools Division for 1979-1980 is approximately $366 million, of which $325 million is spent on salaries. Of the remaining $41 million, $18 is spent directly by schools. This has increased during recent years in the belief that there is greater efficiency, economy and effectiveness if the decisions are made where the action is!

The first national conference on School Based Decision Making (1977, p. 13) noted that in respect of financial arrangements:

> "The most significant developments appear to be in Victoria where almost ten per cent of the total education budget is spent by school councils and . . . accounting systems had been developed and are being progressively refined to meet the requirements of school-based funding."

Of course, closely connected with school-based control over funds is the continuing development of school council functioning. These school-based structures are seen to provide the legal framework able to take the responsibility and provide the accountability necessary for the spending of public monies. However, as the participants of the second conference on School Community Based Decision Making (1979) noted, problems of allocation and accountability still exist. (For a summary of the issues see School Community Based Decision-Making, 1979, p. 11-12).

Clearly, matters concerning finance are crucial in the devolutionary debate since it is often such concern that determines the extent to which school communities can implement programs to meet their specified needs.

The building function has achieved significant decentralisation in decision-making. Regions now determine the scope of major building projects (each of $50,000 and above) and set priorities and individual project budgets. Minor projects (each below $50,000) are managed entirely by the regions within the overall scope of a Regional budget.

A Planning Guidelines booklet (1979) designed and developed by the Planning Services Division aimed at assisting in the formation of Planning Committees and preparing education specifications for new schools is now available.

In the past, the provision of educational facilities has been left almost entirely to the Education Department. Planning for school facilities is centralised, but there is a growing community awareness of the unrealised potential in the involvement of local government in such activities, and it is at this level of administration that community development can occur.

"Operation Outreach" introduced in 1976, undertook to assist authorities and organisations involved in the planning and development of educational facilities. This project aimed at creating a greater awareness of the flexibility and potential of these facilities and to encourage a closer working relationship between groups/and organisations responsible for their provision, so that the community at large could benefit from a more rational approach to their delivery.

This project and the associated guidelines is set in the context of the restructuring of sections of the Education Department and its construction authority, the Public Works Department. The changes are aimed to introduce a level of participation by the school community in the decision-making process. As a result, for the majority of planning and building proposals, the school community will be directly involved in priority setting and decision-making at the local and regional level.

The Second Reading Speech of the Education (Amendment) Bill 1979, highlights the success of the project. Promotion of the sharing of strategic planning of education with local government, resulting in new initiatives, has already led to major changes in the concept of school and community service co-ordination (Lacy, 1979, p. 1).

Whilst it was previously realised that underutilised resources in the community could be combined with public resources invested in education with major economic, social and cultural benefits, many willing locally-based agencies interested in the joint development of facilities and services were inhibited by the requirement to be a public body and to build only on Education Department land.

The Education (Further Amendment) Act of 1978 empowered the Minister of Education to enter into agreements to jointly develop a facility service on any land and removed the traditional requirement that public capital investment must be secured by land tenure. The Assistant Minister of Education, Lacy (1979, p. 2) reports that "agreements with Youth Hostels Association, The Young Men's Christian Association, the Catholic Education Office, regional library groups and voluntary associations and with municipalities, on land not owned by the Education Department, are now being negotiated". Further school council legislative extensions "enable a school council to enter contracts with any other school council and allow for the payment to school councils for works undertaken on their own behalf, or on behalf of other school councils" (Lacy, 1979, p. 2).

Obviously the product, resulting from involvement between the Education Department, municipal councils, school councils and other community organisations and agencies, is more substantial, flexible and viable than the individual components operating separately. (Operation Outreach 1976).

Legislative examples cited here are indicative of the continuing and real commitment to decentralisation of power and devolution of decision-making to the school community in the effective control of resources. Indeed, it can be claimed that there is no state system of schooling in Australia and few external examples, with comparable powers at local or community level (Lacy, 1979, p. 3).

Notwithstanding current developments and progress, if we are to continue to promote the development of school structures able to accommodate and respond to the changing needs of individual school communities, we must also acknowledge the continuing need for analysis to determine which decisions can most appropriately be made at local, regional and system level.

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PROCESSES OF DECISION-MAKING IN THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL SECTOR IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

J. C. Cusack

In the first section of this paper, comment is made on some aspects of federal involvement in education and its effect on decision-making in the state. The second section describes levels and processes of decision-making in the government school sector in South Australia. In the final section, comment is made on these processes and some questions are posed for discussion.

The views expressed in the paper are those of the author and the descriptions of levels and processes are personal perceptions.

Decision-Making and Education — Federal and State Roles

There has long been debate about the respective roles of the Federal and State Governments in education in Australia. This debate is not peculiar to Australia, but has been an issue for many years in the United State of America and Canada in the context of a three tier governing structure — federal, state and local. In a national versus local context, similar issues have also been alive in the United Kingdom.

In one sense, the debate in Australia has been concentrated on the federal and state level of involvement, since local responsibility for education has been virtually non-existent. In this regard, i.e. as a bipartisan struggle, one can see parallels with the United Kingdom in relation to issues such as funding, long term planning, curriculum development and teacher supply. In another sense, there are parallels between the bipartisan struggle between local boards and state or provincial authorities in North America, with the federal role being relatively insignificant until recently.

As Katz (1971) points out, British education is a centralized system in that it is a national system, created by Parliament and subject to regulation by it. The central authority exercised a high degree of control over educational finance, building allocations and nature of school organizations, standards, teacher supply and teacher salaries, attendance regulations for students. It has chosen to establish local education authorities in whom it vests responsibility for ownership of facilities and employment of personnel. It has chosen not to act in matters of curriculum, which are left, in the main, to local education authorities and to schools themselves. In this sense, British education is seen by the British to a decentralized system (and it is, by comparison with many European countries), but it is perceived by North Americans to be a centralized system because of the amount of national control. In many ways, a better comparison can be made between the British system and that of a state in the United States or a Canadian province, with the Department of Education and Science corresponding to a State Education Department and a local education authority corresponding to a school

board. The analogy is not exact because it leaves out of consideration a third level, viz. that of the governors (managers) of schools in England and Wales, a level which is not a characteristic of school governance in North America. It also omits a comparison of the different status of autonomy, particularly in curriculum matters, accorded to the school principal in the United Kingdom and North America.

Education in Australia is, in one sense, not as centralized as in the United Kingdom, since it is not controlled nationally. The parallels are greater with the federal systems of the United States of America and Canada, in both of which education is a state or provincial responsibility. From another perspective, education in Australia is more centralized than in the United Kingdom, since there are no bodies equivalent to local education authorities, State Education Departments are responsible for finance, buildings, employment of teachers and curriculum. Similarly, education in Australia is seen to be more centralized than in North America where local boards of education are the employing authority and have delegated responsibilities in other areas, but with the degree of responsibility varying considerably.

Federal Involvement in Education in Australia

The Australian Constitution does not make any explicit reference to education as a responsibility to be transferred from the state to the Federal Government. Birch (1975) establishes that this was not accidental. Other matters were of much greater concern to the founding fathers of the Commonwealth. Moreover, education at that stage was not a major item of Government spending.

It is also quite likely that the attitudes of earlier federations, United States of America and Canada, had had a bearing on the limited attention given on education although, in the final analysis, the Canadian model of nominating specific powers for the provinces and reserving the remainder to the federal authority as residual powers was rejected. In the main, states' rights in education were maintained and the powers assigned to the Commonwealth were specific and restricted. In essence, education, which was a state responsibility, was not an issue at federal conference and conventions held in the 1890's. This situation obtained, by and large until 1946. In one sense, the provision of Child Endowment, introduced with dubious constitutional authority in 1941, can be seen as the first attempt of the Commonwealth to affect outcomes in education, albeit indirectly. Much of the justification of the Bill related to the increased capacity of parents to keep students at school for a longer period. It was, in effect, a scheme of direct grants to parents, part of which was regarded as educational in purpose.

The election of the Curtin Government resulted in moves to change the constitution to enable a course of social reconstruction to be pursued. In spite of a number of abortive efforts to gain powers which would have increased federal involvement in education, a further attempt was made in 1946. In a successful referendum, the Commonwealth Government was given a new constitutional power, the Social Services amendment, S.51 (XXIIIA), which included a rather vague provision, "benefits to students".

This clause "was intended to provide a head of power under which appropriation could be made for the provisions contained in the 1945 Education Act" (Birch, 1977, page 32). This nuclear federal responsibility has provided the basis for much of what has later followed in increased Commonwealth responsibility for education.

Although the constitutional amendment was made under a Labour Government, its first signficant use was made by Menzies in 1951 in providing grants to the states for Universities and their residential colleges. In commenting on this provision, Evatt foreshadowed the extension of Commonwealth involvement to students at pre-university level (Birch, 1975). It is safe to say, however, that few, if any, of the politicians involved in the period 1946-1972 had any clear idea of the extent to which the Commonwealth Government would become involved in education in Australia, particularly at the school level.

Although the Commonwealth has some constitutional authority for involvement in education, the basic responsibility of the States for education has not been questioned. For many years, financing of education was a state responsibility, funds being allocated from reimbursed taxation once the Commonwealth was ceded personal taxation rights by the States. Apart from direct payments to students through a scholarships scheme, the only specific contribution of the Commonwealth to Primary and Secondary Education prior to the establishment of the Interim Schools Commission was the provision of funds for upgrading science laboratories and equipment and, later, for library/resource centres. These provisions were noteworthy in that grants were made available for non-government schools as well as for state school systems. The extent of federal funding changed with the establishment of the Schools Commission, which owes its legality to the "benefits to students" provision in the 1946 constitutional amendment. It is unnecessary to detail the work of the Schools Commission in this paper. Suffice it to say that it represents a significant Commonwealth presence on schooling in Australia and it has had considerable impact on the processes of decision-making.

The Schools Commission and Decision-Making

Prior to the establishment of the Schools Commission, federal involvement did not directly affect the decision-making processes within the state or within schools — it was largely a matter of allocation of additional resources. This changed with establishment of the Schools Commission after the election of a Labour Government in 1972. The reports of the Schools Commission not only identified deficiencies in education in Australia and recommended massive increases in spending; the reports proposed that changes be made in the decision-making processes themselves. The manner in which some at least of the funds was allocated was specifically directed towards creating a more broadly based decision-making process. There were opportunities for schools and individual teachers within schools to apply directly to the Schools Commission for funding. For state schools, this provided for the first time an opportunity to gain public funds from a source other than the State Education Department and, in so doing, to

bypass that Department. It provided, in a small way, a feeling of some independence and reinforced the attitude which the Jones Freedom and Authority memorandum had been attempting to develop.

These provisions were particularly evident in the Innovations Program and the Teacher Development Program. The Schools Commission took the view that not only should schools and the teachers in them be involved in some of the decision-making processes in education, particularly those decisions which were dependent on Schools Commission funding, but that there should be opportunities for parents and the community to be involved. These aims of the Commission have been promoted in a number of ways. One has been through the mechanism of releasing reports and issuing a wide variety of publications. This in itself represented a change and stimulated a more open attitude towards the availability of information, an aspect on which McKinnon (Note 1) has commented. Another has been to promote the attendance of parents at conferences, particularly joint conferences for teachers and parents. A third mechanism has been to include parents and other community members in eligibility for funding for innovation projects and for making visits to other schools both intra and interstate.

Encouragement has also been given for parents to be involved in developing school submissions and in the implementation of projects funded under the Disadvantaged Schools Program. This has been extended in some instances to regional or systemic administration of aspects of this program. Finally, the Schools Commission has mounted its own projects to collect and disseminate information on school/community interaction and to actively encourage this development. Other developments which have influenced the decision-making process have occurred as a result of decisions taken with regard to special education, education of girls, and sexism in education.

More recently, the Schools Commission has made funds available from the Special Projects Grant to encourage initiatives in school level evaluation. The rationale for this support is essentially that change is most effective if those affected are involved in evaluation, decision-making and implementation.

It could be claimed that these developments would have occurred in the current social mileau without the involvement of or support of the Schools Commission. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the Schools Commission did become involved and, apart from the provision of funds which undoubtedly did stimulate greater interest in this area, the encouragement by the Schools Commission of a broader base for decision-making undoubtedly has had some effect on the nature of the decisions which have been made in these areas. This influence is continuing.

Current Trends

In recent years, there have been trends in education in Australia which can be seen, on the one hand, as a movement towards greater centralism — increased federal involvement, directly and through the Schools Commission — and, on the other hand, as a movement towards decentralization — establishment of educational regions and increased devolution to

school councils boards. Irrespective of the direction of the movement, there is little doubt that levels of decision-making and decision-making processes will be important characteristics of the 80's. Pusey (Note 2) argues that conflicts over the governance and control of education will be the dominant issue. He bases this on three premises

- education is central to the social, political and economic life of a society,
- education systems in developed western societies are resistant to control,
- accelerating social change generates new demands on education systems (page 1).

Using arguments reminiscent of Lasswell's (1950) definition of politics as allocation of values, Pusey sees schooling having an allocation function, which was formerly achieved through birth into a particular social class, and a legitimation function in maintaining the status quo of a society. Such approaches might suggest that societies would tend to move towards centralized control of mass education. On the other hand, Pusey points to the difficulties associated with organizational control of education due to the lack of clear statements of goals, their multiplicity and the degree of autonomy associated with "the isolation and sanctuary of the classroom" (page 6). Finally, Pusey points to sociological factors — urbanisation, industrialisation, affluence, modern communications and technological change — which have diminished the influence of the local community, the extended family and the church and at the same time increased pressures on schools, resulting in an increase in unclearly articulated educational goals. This has resulted in conflict leading to an outcome described as "privatisation of life" which, by leading to some degree of withdrawal from organizational participation, "creates changes which are then seen as needs for new forms of social control" (page 10).

These forces tending towards greater control on the one hand and to less control on the other can lead to conflict. This view is shared by Parry (Note 3). In this paper, comment is made on these two apparently conflicting trends in Australia, with particular reference to developments in South Australia.

Decison-Making in South Australia

Schooling in state schools in South Australia is provided under the authority of the Education Act (1972). This Act was designed to accommodate changes which were felt to be necessary at the time and to change the Act, in part at least, from prescribing to enabling legislation. In many aspects covered by the Act, changes can now be effected by proclamation of Regulations rather than by amendments to the Act. The Act makes the Minister of Education responsible to Parliament for the provision of schools and the employment of teachers and other staff required for the functioning of schools and the Education Department. It specifies that the Director-General of Education shall be responsible for the curriculum. Although a great deal of delegation can be and is practised, nevertheless the ultimate accountability is that of the Minister to Parliament. This is a fact

which cannot lightly be disregarded in consideration of levels and processes of decision-making. It does not, however, mean that schools should not be accountable to parents and local communities but there is considerable uncertainty about how such accountability is rendered.

Processes in Decision-Making

Decisions in education which involve changes to the Education Act or Regulations made under the Education Act are considered and endorsed by Cabinet and finally by Parliament before becoming effective. These decisions relate more often to the teaching service and the provision of ancillary services to students than to the educational process itself, particularly since, in South Australia, curriculum is the province of the Director-General of Education. Budgetary provision for education is, of course a major Cabinet and finally Parliamentary decision.

Within the constraints imposed by the Education Act and its Regulations and the financial constraints of the budget allocated to the Education Department, the Minister of Education and the Director-General of Education are responsible for the highest levels of decision-making (except as provided through specific appeal mechanisms).

The Education Act and Regulations and the Audit Act require certain decisions to be made by the Minister on the recommendation of the Director-General of Education. In other instances, the Director-General of Education may consider it advisable or expedient to seek Ministerial approval for actions he proposes to take.

It is relevant, at this stage, to point out that the Minister receives advice from sources other than the Director-General of Education. Two major groups which offer advice and which the Minister may consult are the South Australian Institute of Teachers and associations of School Councils and parents' clubs.

Thus, a first level of decision-making in education in a broad policy sense and in the determination of the allocation of total resources is at the Government level, essentially by Cabinet but, in some cases, requiring Parliamentary approval. A second level is the Ministerial level and advice is available to the Minister from the Director-General of Education. This is both sought and preferred, but, as pointed out above, this is not the only source of advice available to the Ministry.

Decision-Making at Central Office Level

How does the Director-General of Education reach decisions?

Robertson (1977) notes that "in any organizational setting, decision-making does not exist as a separate entity but forms part of a complex set of inter-relationships within the dynamics of an organization. Leadership, communication and organizational structures are all affected by the decision-making process". (page 2).

Decision-making at a senior level is not an easy process to describe since it involves a complex network of formal and informal arrangements.

The Director-General of Education seeks advice on some issues from his two deputies. He also consults central office directors and individual Regional Directors on specific matters.

More formally, three committees have been established for giving advice to the Director-General, making recommendations on matters referred to them or which they may initiate, or making decisions on matters within their terms of reference.

These committees are as follows:

1. Regional-Directors Committee

   The chairman is the Deputy Director-General of Education (Schools) and all regional directors are members. The committee provides a medium for co-ordinating school management issues. It acts as an advisory group to the Direc or-General of Education on a wide range of issues affecting the operations of schools and identifies issues which may require definition of policy.

2. Management Committee

   The chairman is the Deputy Director-General of Education (Resources). All central office directors are members, two regional directors and the Senior Finance Officer. It makes decisions on system-wide management issues, refers some matters for the consideration of Policy Committee and is the principal departmental focus for financial planning and management. In this third role, its membership is augmented by the inclusion of the Chief Accountant and other finance officers.

3. Policy Committee

   The chairman is the Director-General. All central office directors are members, two regional directors and the Women's Advisor. It is the senior decision-making group and decides major policy directions for the Education Department.

All three committees use a consensus model but with the latter two committees in particular, a consensus is sometimes only achieved after proposals are withdrawn and referred to their originator for revision.

A relatively recent development to assist the processes of decision-making, particularly those of Policy Committee, has been the establishment of a Policy Review Unit. The Unit is intended to be both forward looking and backward looking, involved in the development of policies on complex educational issues as well as the review of existing policies. In the last few weeks, organizational changes have resulted in some modifications to the operation and location of this unit but the basic idea of having a mechanism to facilitate the processes of decision-making at senior level has been maintained.

Central Office Directorates have a variety of mechanisms for seeing that the Director is briefed adequately on matters to be discussed. Regional directors use telex when it is necessary to seek comment from their colleagues in other Regions.

Decision-making within Directorates is limited to matters which are a responsibility directly delegated by the Director-General of Education to the Director, central or regional. Matters beyond these areas of responsibility are referred by Directors to Management Committee or Policy Committee, often, but not necessarily, via the Regional Directors Committee, particularly if the matter was initiated by a regional director.

One could distinguish a number of levels of decision-making within the hierarchy of an education bureaucracy from the Director-General of Education down. Reference has already been made to three senior decision-making committees and to decision-making within Directorates. In the interests of simplicity however, the third level will be regarded as central office level. This should not be taken to imply that all decisions made in central office are more important, than decisions taken at regional level, not that such decisions necessarily have more authority than those taken at regional level. There is in practice, considerable overlap in the hierarchy of officers based centrally and in regions.

In general terms, decision-making at central office level concerns issues which have system wide or cross-regional implications. The same issues may be a concern at other levels of decision-making, but the scope of the decisional effects becomes progressively reduced as one proceeds from higher to lower levels of decision-making. An example will help to clarify this. A decision to move towards a reduction in pupil/teacher ratios clearly has major financial implications and under some circumstances, such a proposal could be taken by the Minister to Cabinet. The matter would have been considered by Policy Committee and forwarded to the Minister as a recommendation from the Director-General of Education. The implementation of such a policy change would be in the hands of the Director of Personnel, in the first instance, because of its system wide ramifications in allocation of personnel resources. Decision on allocation of teachers to specific schools within regions are made at the regional level. Finally, the manner in which the personnel resources are used is decided at the school level.

Decision-Making at Regional Level

The above example has drawn attention to two further levels of decision-making, viz, regional and school. The regional level is basically an operational level. The regional director is responsible to the Director-General of Education for the effectivenesss of the ongoing operations of the schools within the region. This role involes some regulating functions and some advisory functions; it also provides a great deal of scope for initiative and development. The region provides a direct service to schools but also provides a link with other regions and between schools and the central office.

Within a regional organization, one could again identify a number of different levels of decision-making. Again, for simplicity, regional decision-making will be considered as one level.

Regional directors are responsible for the operation of schools, and since this includes buildings, curriculum, finance and personnel there is some interaction with central office directorates which are organized on the

basis of system functions. This can and does lead to some difficulties in definition of specific areas of responsibility. Both conflict and uncertainty can arise and this is commented on below. The role of the regional directors has progressively been expanded as complete regionalization of the state was achieved and the central office organization became functional. The current duties are shown in Appendix A.

Part of the job of a regional director is to be aware of community interests and needs. The regional director represents the Director-General of Education in the region and has an important public relations job. There is no formal mechanism established through which a regional director gets direction or advice from the community. There is, for example, no structure which corresponds in any way to that of a North American school board and its relationship with a school superintendent. In one instance at least, a regional director in a country region has established an ad hoc group of chairpersons of school councils in the region. This is purely an advisory group.

Regional directors are involved in the allocation of resources to schools, particularly with regard to personnel, but also for so called "minor works" involving modifications to school buildings, determination of priorities for major maintenance works. In most regions, committees with representation from schools and school councils have been established to determine priorities for allocation of these funds. The allocation of finances for school operations, however, is centrally determined by applying various formulae on a state wide basis. Thus, a process of devolution of decision-making authority from central office has not stopped at the regional level, but has moved through to the school level. A similar situation obtains with respect to curriculum but a great deal of uncertainty has developed in this area.

Decision-Making at the School Level

Decision-making at the school level can be considered to centre on the role of the principal and that of a school council. In both cases, some marked changes can be noted.

The significance of the role of the principal is made clear in the Education Act and Regulations and in the oft-quoted "Freedom and Authority" memorandum (Jones 1977). This does not confer autonomy on principals but makes it clear that, within the constraints of the Education Act and Regulations, Departmental policies, and subject to due processes of consultation with parents and staff, the principal enjoys a considerable degree of discretionary power. Changes made progressively over a number of years, have resulted in schools being given financial flexibility to determine priorities of spending within monetary allocations made to the school.

The stages involved have been:

- central office determination of the level of supplies and equipment,
- determination of notional amounts permitted to be expended in specific categories.

- provision of some cash grants for expenditure in specific categories,
- provision of an aggregated cash grant to be spent as determined by the school.

This has encouraged schools to develop budgets, plan expenditure ahead and exercise more careful control over expenditure and on usage of materials. Savings effected in one area are available for use in another. Not all school expenditures are currently controlled at the school level, the major exceptions being utilities (water, energy, telephones) and, of course, personnel. However, schools exert considerable influence on the nature of the staffing provided. The staffing procedures provide a base allocation and a negotiable factor which it resolved by discussions between the principal and regional officers. Constraints imposed by reduced mobility of teachers due to decreased promotion opportunities and reduced resignation rates have lessened the scope for schools to be selective in staffing.

One of the items which attracted an early cash grant was grounds maintenance. This grant, unlike others which are paid into the school fund and are directly under the control of the principal is paid to the school council. With additional cash grants now being made to schools, it is a matter of some debate whether the grants should be operated through the school fund, under the control of the principal, or through the school council account. Notwithstanding this debate, a growing practice seems to be the establishment by larger schools, particularly high schools, of a finance committee, whose task it is to prepare a total budget for the school, taking into account the funds which are available from all sources within the school. In this sense, the debate is largely academic. In another sense, it highlights some uncertainty about the role of the council in decision-making at the school level.

School councils are statutory bodies established for each school under the Education Act. Membership includes representatives of school parent organizations, parents elected at an annual meeting, staff, a nominee of a member of parliament, a nominee of local government and students in secondary schools, if desired by the council. The number of parents must be greater than one-half of the total membership. Duties of school councils are listed in Appendix B.

There are different views about the nature of the responsibilities of councils. Most of the roles specified lead to a conclusion that the role is advisory, except for the management of specific grants made to the school council. However, Olsen (Note 4) adopts the view that the duty to exercise a general oversight over the well-being of the school is a broadly based executive function which implies accountability of the principal to the school council. He argues for "a much more clearly defined definition of the real relationship between principals, as the key focal points in decision-making, and the school councils" (page 11). This may well have occurred in individual schools but no moves have been made to modify the roles as specified in 1972.

Staff-Participation

The Jones memorandum emphasised the responsibility for principals to involve staff in formulating policy and decision-making within schools. This was later incorporated into Regulations and was given encouragement within a broader framework of industrial democracy fostered by the previous Government. It has been given a clearer expression in the publication of a Schools Discussion Paper No. 5 "Staff Participation in School Decision-Making" outlining processes for increasing the degree of staff participation. The extent to which these principles are applied in schools shows considerable variation from school to school. It is a factor of type of school, size of school and personality of the principal.

Jones (1977, page 10), in commenting upon participation by school staff in decision-making, identified the two extreme management styles of bureaucratic and democratic. He clearly favoured the democratic style but tended to over-simplify the complex organizational nature of schools and not to recognize the inherent conflict between such an approach and the imposed bureaucratic, hierarchical structure which still characterizes the organization of most schools of any size. Movement towards increased participation is a slow and involved process which requires much more than simply a predisposition towards it by the principal.

Although structures have been gradually emerging which have allowed for increased participation of staff in decision-making, there has been a tendency, both at and beyond school level for issues to be of a managerial, resource-oriented nature rather than educational issues. A recognition of this tendency led to the development of the production and distribution of "schools discussion papers". The basic aim has been to commission a "green paper" on a specific topic and for this to be circulated to all schools and other interested parties for discussion and feedback. Evaluation of the feedback can then result in modification of the paper and may lead to a policy statement. It is too early at this stage to access how effectively this process of involving a much wider range of teachers and the community in policy formulation and decision-making is working.

Community and Parent Involvement in Decision-Making

In describing the various processes of decision-making, a number of different levels of decision-making have been identified within the organizational structure. Interacting with the professional component at various levels, there is also a parental and community component, to which reference has been made in some instances above.

As has been pointed out, the constitutional responsibility of public school education is clearly at state level and the extent of devolution of decision-making authority to regions and to schools is determined by the state. Apart from the ultimate responsibility to Parliament, the only levels in South Australia at which there is legislative provision for parental or community involvement is:—

1. The Advisory Curriculum Board, at the central level.
2. School Councils, at the school level.

The part played by school councils has been discussed above. The Terms of Reference of the Advisory Curriculum Board are shown in Appendix C.

This Board has been in existence only since 1979 and it is too early to assess the impact which it may have. Parent associations have the potential to exert influence at the school level and their State organizations can be particularly effective in influencing decisions made at the central level. A recent move has been to establish a regional parent association in one region and this will undoubtedly provide a more formal mechanism for influencing decisions made at the regional level. From time to time, ad hoc groups are established which create further mechanisms for parent/community input. One such group is the School Based Funding Joint Discussion Committee on which the Association of State School Organizations is represented. Others include a Ministerial Advisory Committee on School to Employment and the Multi-cultural Education Co-ordinating Committee.

The recent experience of more teachers seeking jobs than there are positions available plus the development of autonomous Colleges of Advanced Education as preservice training institutions resulted in a radical change in employment procedures. A careful selection process involving interviews has been devised and gradually modified to reduce the extent of central office personnel involvement and increase the extent of Regional and school level involvement. The Director-General of Education, Mr. J. R. Steinle (Note 5) has foreshadowed a further movement towards community involvement in staff selection. Somewhat ironically, the very factors which have made such a development feasible also reduce the chances of it occurring due to the marked decline in teacher mobility.

An important recent development has been to involve parents and the local community in decisions affecting the provision of physical resources at schools. This takes two forms. Projects officers consult with a school council in assessing the need for increased, modified or upgraded accommodation. Plans are later discussed before decisions are made. When a new school is to be provided in a developing area, problems are experienced because the community is embryonic. In such cases, consultative mechanisms are established at an early stage and a "holding school" provided in relocatable accommodation. This is often the first public facility in an area and provides a community focus. Parent and community input from the developing community is then provided into the decisions which shape the nature of the solid construction buildings provided as a new school.

Brindlecombe (1976) has pointed out that the idea of community involvement is a relatively recent one since, unlike the United Kingdom and the United States, local government in Australia has always been weak and there is no tradition of community participation in education policies and decision-making processes (page 7). The model of parent involvement developing in South Australia does not include local government to any significant extent and may in fact prove to be more effective than the models which have emerged in the United Kingdom and North America.

Involvement of the South Australian Institute of Teachers in Decision-Making

The South Australian Institute of Teachers is the only teacher organization in South Australia and it has both an industrial and professional role. One of the characteristics of the modus operandi of the Education Department and the Institute of Teachers has been that of maintaining open channels of communication. The nature of the consultation varies. In some instances there may be joint working parties established, resulting in mutually acceptable solutions. In others, a policy may be developed unilaterally but full consultation occurs before a decision is made to implement it. An outstanding example which will lead to a high level of participation in a decision-making process is the Schools Commission funded JESIFA Project, (Note 6), designed as an Education Department-SAIT exercise in providing information to teachers in schools on reduced prospects of teacher mobility and to enable grass roots involvement in gathering feedback to enable the Education Department to develop recommendations for alternatives to current procedures. The Schools Commission has classified the project as one of "national importance".

Discussion

Identification of levels of involvement in decision-making at federal, state, regional and school level and sub levels within each of these administrative structures gives a clear indication of a hierarchical structure. The organizational model often used to describe this arrangement is the bureaucratic model. Such a model assumes that the goals of an organization "are unambiguous, stable and agreed upon by participants and . . . that the means by which the goals may be achieved are understood and specifiable." (Harmaway, J. and Sproull, L. S.; 1979). This is clearly not the case in education, as noted above by Pusey (1979).

An alternative model is Weick's (1976) loosely-coupled model. In this model it is recognized that control and co-ordination are not always as rational and efficient as a bureaucratic model requires. The model injects an idea of fluidity, rather than rigidity, and acknowledges that goals are sometimes ill-defined and variable, and the means of achieving them are unclear and also often variable. The loosely-coupled model predicates flexible interaction between the component parts of an organization. This is a characteristic of the way in which teachers operate within a school, schools function in a regional and state structure and regions function in relation to central administration. The model can be extended to describe the nature of the interactions which each of the levels within a state has with components at the federal level. The ways in which the Schools Commission, for example, interacts with individual teachers, schools, parent groups, regions, units within central office and with central office as an entity just do not fit a classical bureaucratic model with regard to either communications processes or decision-making.

Acceptance of a loosely-coupled model to describe characteristics of an educational system implies that uncertainty and conflict are predictable processes, not pathological occurrences. (Harmaway, et al, 1979.)

Following Parry (Note 3) and paraphrasing Heisenberg's famous "Uncertainty Principle" of the impossibility of determining with accuracy both the position and momentum of a particle simultaneously, uncertainty refers to the difficulty which educational administrators have; the more rapid the pace of change, the more difficult it is to be sure what is happening. This poses problems for decision-makers at all levels in the system.

It must also be recognised that increased opportunities for participation in the processes of decision-making in education will, in itself, create the potential for conflict between levels, in a hierarchical sense, between functionally organized groups in the system, and within any level or functional group. Conflict can be regarded as endemic to the decision-making process and whilst it can be destructive and counter productive, it can also be creative. Proponents of increased participation in decision-making, particularly when it reaches the stage of involvement indicated by personal commitment, should recognise the inherent possibilities of conflict. Strategies need to be available, not so much to avoid all conflict, but for conflict resolution. This is illustrated in Discussion Paper No. 6 entitled in its first draft "Parents and the School: Resolution of Difficulties".

Conflict is a term which occurs frequently in literature on management. Overt conflict can be said to occur when two or more groups move beyond certain socially accepted norms of resolving disagreements (Weeres, 1971, page 2). It is regarded as necessary at times to ensure that an organization fulfils its goals. The problem is exacerbated when organizational goals are unclear, a long standing characteristic of education.

If one regards educational administration as a special process, the model developed by Getzels and Guba (1957) can be used to conceptualize conflict in terms of interactions between institutions and individuals.

Associated with the institutions are roles and expectations which are determined by the goals of the system. Individuals have their own personalities and need-dispositions and interactions between these constitute social behaviour. The model, therefore, has two dimensions; a nomothetic or normative dimension, defined by the institutions of the social system, and an ideographic or individual dimension, defined by the individuals. Since the institutions are normative and define the roles, the roles determine, at least to a large degree, the role expectations upon the actor in the role. Roles are therefore, identified more with positions than with persons and are regarded as "institutional givens" (Getzels and Guba, 1957, page 426). Furthermore, roles are regarded as complementary and interdependent.

Conflict can theoretically occur within the nomothetic dimension and such an incongruity is represented by role conflict which occurs "whenever a role incumbent is required to conform simultaneously to a number of expectations which are mutually exclusive, contradictory or inconsistent" (Getzels, 1958, page 161). Personality conflict can also occur within the ideographic dimension as a result of opposing needs and dispositions within the individual. Finally, it is possible for role — personality conflict to occur and this is represented by incongruence between the nomothetic and ideographic dimensions.

It is not hard to think of examples which illustrate role conflict for teachers in promotion positions, particularly the school principal and for the classroom teacher. Problems also arise for individuals working at other levels in the organizational structure of an education system.

In a situation where an employee receives orders from more than one superior, violating the principle of single accountability and role theory, one can expect role conflict and its associated reduction in organizational effectiveness and personal satisfaction. A number of studies are cited which indicate that "professionals in such situations experience stress as a result of being caught in the middle" (Rizzo et al., 1970, page 151). Rizzo et al. found that accountability to one superior reduced inconsistent expectations and resulted in less role conflict.

Role ambiguity is another aspect of role theory which the literature suggests can have an effect on performance and satisfaction (Lyons, 1971; Rizzo et al., 1970; Rogers and Molnar, 1976). Some uncertainty exists, however, about the direction of the effect. Role ambiguity can occur if the incumbent lacks or feels a lack of adequate role relevant information, particularly as a result of a restriction of information or uncertainty about the quality of the information (Lyons, 1971).

Some difficulties in this area sometimes appear when personnel are required to undertake both regional and central office responsibilities.

Role conflict and role ambiguity can create many difficulties in the decision-making process and these problems can be accentuated when flatter organizational structures are developed and increased participation in decision-making occurs.

Taylor (Note 7) comments upon the extent to which a higher level of participation in decision-making can be achieved by teachers, parents, students and citizens. He sees this as a development which is likely to emerge more strongly in the 1980's and points to the necessity of a clear understanding of what participation in decision-making involves for individuals and institutions. According to Taylor "high levels of participation are not necessarily conducive to change, or to good decision-making in crises." (Page 35.) He points to the need to "educate people for participation and to ensure that the modes of participatory activities are relevant to the task in hand," (Page 36).

Pusey (Note 2) claims that governments want more control over education, not concrete and specific controls which create "unmanageably complex problems" (page 11) but more "governability" or "steering capacity". He sees this being increased through scientific problem-solving using the techniques of applied science and social science in the name of rationalisation. He argues, however, that "the things which matter most are those characteristics of the teaching situation which are particular to the individuals involved, to their relationships with each other and to particular context in which the relationship is set" (page 14) and further, "that more rationalisation is undersirable and counter-productive". Pusey sees a change in the nature of "steering capacity" from that of a traditional

bureaucracy in the 1960's to a much more diffuse and somewhat vaguely defined "ideological" control, using more subtle mechanisms. If Pusey is correct, a clear analysis of what is meant by participation in decision-making becomes an important concern, a point which has been made by Taylor (Note 7).

According to Tannock (1975) the values espoused by Karmel in the Report of the Interim Committee of the Schools Commission were devolution of responsibility, equality, diversity, choice in school and community involvement. Tannock predicted that "there will be a major move towards genuine regionalization, with the decentralisation of virtually all signification decision-making power (notably in the financial and staffing areas) to local and even individual school authorities" (page 51).

It will be clear from this paper that substantial movement in this direction has occurred in South Australia, even to the extent of questioning by some as to its effectiveness and efficiency and whether in some areas, particularly in curriculum, the movement has not gone too far. The author does not subscribe to this view but recognises that some clarification of respective responsibilities at different levels is required. One way in which this is being attempted is through the development of the publication "Into the 80's" (Note 8), a statement of purposes in education and guidelines for schools on curriculum development and implementation. This may remove some uncertainties and resolve some conflicts. We may be well advised, however, to recognize that these factors are characteristics of educational systems and we should learn to live with one and make productive use of the other.

What of the Future?

The following questions are posed for discussion:

- should there be continued devolution of managerial functions to school level,
- is there likely to be increased centralism in curriculum,
- how can we get clarification of the types and levels of participation desired by different groups,
- what moves can be taken to enchance the role of school councils,
- does a greater role for school councils in decision-making create uncertainty about the role of regions,
- what are the factors which may result in reduced levels of participation in decision-making in schools,
- to what extent is a greater involvement in decision-making likely to lead to increased politicising of the role of the school principal and the school council,
- what lessons can we learn from experiences in the private school sector.

Appendix A

Regional Educaton Offices

Regional Directors of Education
General Powers and Duties

A Regional Director is required, within a Region, to:

(1) represent the Director-General in all educational matters;

(2) decide, within the broad Departmental policy in relation to those duties which have been delegated to the Director, those matters affecting schools over which Principals do not have authority; and

(3) ensure that relevant local information is made available to officers of the Department.

Specific Duties

A regional Director is required to exercise the following specific duties within a region. To be the representative of the Director-General of Education in all educational matters within the region involving the interpretation of Departmental policy for Principals, teachers, parents and community groups, and act as the Department's representative at official functions. Specific associated duties are listed.

(1) Assist with evaluation of school programs, where applicable.

(2) Discuss current educational topics with teachers, parents and the community.

(3) When appropriate, consult with local government bodies, parental bodies, and professional organisations.

(4) Represent the Department at functions such as opening of new schools, speech nights and educational meetings.

(5) Conduct interviews with parents and teachers in special cases.

(6) Prepare programs within the region for visiting specialists and overseas educationists.

(7) Establish working relationships with other planning and development personnel, both within and outside the Department.

(8) Interpret Departmental policy for Principals, their staff and the community.

(9) Co-ordinate visits into the region of personnel who are located centrally or in other regions.

(10) Encourage appropriate experimentation in organisation, curriculum, and methodology practised in schools.

To be involved in the deployment of staff, the professional development of teachers, and other staffing matters.

Specific associated duties are listed.

(1) Assess applicants for some senior promotion positions.

(2) Hear appeals against assessments of ineligibility for promotions.

(3) Relocate teachers within regions as required.

(4) Appoint hourly paid instructors to schools within an approved regional budget.

(5) Determine the distribution of reserve funds for temporary relieving assistants in schools within the region, approve extended budgets where applicable and approve travelling expenses.

(6) Assist the Director of Personnel in recruiting teachers, interviewing applicants for employment and advising on placement.

(7) Foster the professional development of teachers and encourage them to take part in Development Program courses.

(8) Supervise the work of principal education officers and specialist guidance and advisory personnel based in the region.

(9) Initiate special in-service projects and assist where necessary.

(10) Approve temporary replacement (more that 2 weeks, less than 3 months) of ancillary staff in schools (excluding caretakers).

To arrange teacher housing.

The specific functions are listed.

(1) Determine housing priorities for the region.

(2) (a) Allocate tenants to Teacher Housing Authority accommodation.

(b) Authorise rental deductions from salaries.

To be involved in the maintenance, modification, upgrading and acquisition of property and equipment in collaboration with officers of the Public Buildings Department, the Directorate of Educational Facilities and the Directorate of Research and Planning as appropriate.

The specific areas of involvement are listed.

(a) Determine and administer the minor works program for the region.

(b) Determine and periodically review regional priorities for major works.

(c) Monitor the requirements and set priorities for the supply of emergency accommodation within the region.

(d) Make recommendations regarding maintenance programs.

(e) Recommend on the need for and siting of new schools.

(f) Make recommendations concerning the acquisition of additional land and property.

(g) Take emergency action in case of damage to school buildings or property.

(h) Approve the removal of trees on Departmental property.

(i) Manage, with the assistance of a regional committee, the major works capital assistance scheme within the region.

To be concerned with general matters of administration and finance for schools within a region. The following are the detailed responsibilities in this area.

(1) Approve travel expenses for observation visits of teachers.

(2) Investigate complaints from and about schools and teachers.

(3) Authorise closing of schools for in-service training, educational excursions, or for emergency reasons in accordance with policy.

(4) Authorise educational excursions, including associated air travel or interstate travel.

(5) Recommend on reserve school districts and school ceiling enrolments and administer Year 8 enrolments in secondary schools.

(6) Approve the use of private vehicles for official purposes.

(7) Endorse the suspension of students.

(8) Approve leave for teachers, except long service leave, sick leave, accouchement, overseas and extended leave. Recommend on leave applications outside delegated powers.

(9) Issue travel warrants for interstate travel for regional office staff.

(10) Administer and approve the expenditure of funds for teacher development activities.

(11) Determine and administer allocations to schools of grants for certain special projects, e.g. libraries.

(12) Approve the payment of travelling expenses for students in accordance with policy.

(13) Authorise expenditure in accordance with delegation under Audit Regulation 33.

(14) Arrange for the disposal of equipment and amenities at closed schools.

(15) Approve the transfer or salvage of surplus furniture from schools.

(16) Approve the supply of additional and replacement furniture to schools.

(17) Recommend establishment of new transport services and alterations to existing services.

(18) Make decisions on applications for exemption from school attendance.

(19) Receive reports of illegal entry to schools for appropriate action.

(20) Approve use of school buses for educational excursions.

(21) Approve reimbursement for damaged clothing, spectacles and other items of personal equipment of teachers.

(22) Approve telephone alterations and additions in schools.

(23) Approve the waiving of charges for use of school buildings by outside bodies.

(24) Approve claims under the conditions of the Non Metropolitan Teachers Interim Award No. 1.

(25) Approve claims for travel associated with employment of TRA's.
Source: Administrative Instructions and Guidelines Education Department of South Australia Topic 32.

Appendix B

The Role of a School Council

The role of a school council shall be —

(1) to exercise a general oversight over the well-being of the school;

(2) to advise the head teacher as necessary on the correlation between the work of the school and the educational needs of the district;

(3) to note the accommodation, grounds and equipment provided at the school and to advise the Director-General through the head teacher of any alterations, additions and replacements considered necessary;

(4) by agreement with the head teacher, to decide on the distribution of any grant made to the school council by the Minister. Where agreement cannot be reached the matter shall be referred to the Director-General for a decision and his decision shall be final;

(5) to consider in broad outline the general educational policy within the school, of which the head teacher shall keep the school council continuously informed, and advise him of the considered view of the local community regarding educational developments with the school;

(6) to keep proper books of account and to ensure their audit at least once each year, and to make such books available on due notice to any person authorised by the Director-General or the Auditor-General:

(7) to be responsible through the Management Committee, as appointed under Regulation 227 (1) for the management and employment of such persons as are required for the operation of the school canteen;

(8) to carry out such other duties as are prescribed by these regulations or required by the Minister.

Appendix C

Advisory Curriculum Board

Terms of Reference

Purposes

1. To seek, report and represent community* attitudes and wants in regard to curriculum.

2. To advise the Director-General in respect to curriculum, and, in particular, to the policy, purposes, content, processes and likely outcomes of implementation of curricula.

*Community includes parties to the education process and those others directly affected.

3. To make such representations and take such other actions incidental to the above as the Board may determine from time to time.

Composition of Board

Chairperson: Director of Curriculum.

Deputy Chairperson: Assistant Director of Curriculum.

Assistant Director, Early Childhood Education or a nominated representative.

Superintendent, Curriculum, Aboriginal Education.

A representative of the Directorate of Research and Planning nominated by the Director of Research and Planning.

The Women's Adviser in the Education Department.

A representative of the Regional Directors nominated by the Deputy Director-General (Schools).

Four members of Government Schools appointed by the Director-General from a panel nominated by the South Australian Institute of Teachers.

Two representatives of non-Government Schools including one nominated by the Director of Catholic Education and one nominated by the Independent Schools Board.

One representative from a tertiary institution in which teachers are prepared, nominated by Directors of Colleges of Advanced Education.

The Director-General of Further Education or a nominated representative.

One representative of pre-school education nominated by the Kindergarten Union of South Australia.

One representative of the High Schools Councils Association.

One representative of the South Australian Association of State Parents Clubs.

One representative of the South Australian Association of State School Organizations.

One representative of the Association of Junior Primary School Parents Club.

The Chairman of the Public Examinations Board or a representative nominated by the Public Examinations Board.

A representative of the Joint Matriculation Committee.

A representative of employer groups nominated by the President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

A representative of the United Trades and Labour Council.

A representative of the Ethnic Education Advisory Council.

An Executive Officer appointed by the Director of Curriculum.

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PATTERNS OF SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING

W. G. COPPELL and B. F. HENRY

Introduction

Community involvement in education, and to a lesser extent participation in the governance of education, have developed as issues of considerable interest in recent years. As one indication of the measure of this importance the 1977 Annual Conference of the College was addressed to the topic of "The Community and Education".

This paper will consider parent and community participation in school decision making within the broader framework of involvement in education. The reasons for participation are detailed and there is a brief review of the major theoretical models of participation. The background to involvement in schools in the ACT and NSW provides the context for a report on studies of participation in these systems.

Some Definitions

There are a number of terms which are often used in discussing this concept. These include "involvement" and "participation". Unfortunately confusion surrounds the use of these words with MacIver and Page (1950:3) observing that there is a concomitant "high level of use and a low level of meaning" associated with the terms.

The two terms used most consistently are involvement and participation While the two are often interchanged in daily usage, the term "community involvement" is used in the literature to refer to those instances in schools where parents are active but do not have an influence. Involvement would include volunteer aides and canteen assistance.

Mann (1974: 281) has observed of community involvement that,

> . . . the phrase has passed into the professional litany without much analysis. It is neither fashionable nor feasible to be against increasing community involvement. Like 'quality education' or 'accountability' or 'equalisation', the superficial consensus about the desirability of community involvement seems to have preempted much careful scrutiny of the concept or of its associated practices. One of the concept or of its associated practices. One of the most serious consequences of this premature consensus is that it has precluded development of any standards or measure adequate to the task of evaluating community involvement. Thus, although we may all be in agreement that community involvement is a good thing, we are never really certain how it can be encouraged, provided, or judged; and in the absence of suitable standards, we do not have any certain guides to the development of mechanism that will deliver it.

Similarly, Harman (1976) has noted that only limited attention has as yet been paid to some of the fundamental issues and questions related to community involvement and a considerable amount of discussion of community involvement is based on "bold assertions, pious hopes and rather questionable assumptions about attitudes, behaviour and political realities".

Participation assumes that parents have a right to be active, that education cannot proceed effectively without them (Beare, 1974:3) and that they have an impact on decision-making in policy matters (Davies et al, 1977:13). The Sheffington Report, *People and Planning* (Committee on Public Participation in Planning, 1969:1), defines participation as "the act of sharing in the formulation of policies and proposal . . . Participation involves doing as well as talking".

The conservative view has been that, apart from the students, the main participants in education are teachers, and that the principal mover in education in the community is the school. In the last ten years, Beare observes (1977a:161) that this view has changed under the weight of research evidence which has found: that parents are one of the most powerful determinants of the educational achievements of their child, outweighing in their impact and influence all the inputs which school and teachers can provide; that the community provides resources for education far in excess of what any one school can provide; and that community values, community ethics and tone dominate education influences.

Five general areas of consequences of participation in education are identified by Von Moltke (O.E.C.D., 1975:88)

i Most schemes for participation will lead to giving formal recognition, directly or indirectly, to elements of the educational process which have previously occurred informally.

ii Participation will tend to make clear the motivation of the participants in the educational process.

iii Participation will tend to reduce the importance of the pupil/teacher format of education and change the definitions of quality. This is frequently a source of conflict in dealing with participation arrangements.

iv Participation arrangements make it possible to develop new educational roles over a flexible spectrum, decreasing overall role antagonism but also reducing the importance of any one role. It is directly opposed to tendencies towards professionalisation.

v Certain forms of participation will vitally affect the economics of schools. It is argued that while schools will become harder to administer, they will also become economically more effective.

Reasons for Participation

Young and McGeeney (1968:107) have advanced a syllogism with which is represented the main argument in favour of increased parental participation:

1. A rise in the level of parental encouragement augments their children's performance at school.
2. Teachers, by involving parents in the school, bring about a rise in the level of parental encouragement.
3. Teachers, by involving parents in the school, augment the children's performance.

This summarises in exaggerated form one of the principal arguments for participation: that increased participation will augment school performance. This attainment-oriented argument put forward by Young and McGeeney (1968) and echoed by many other researchers, including Wiseman (1967) and Sharrock (1970), is generally offered with another principal argument which is suggested by Young (1964). It is that increased participation which will lessen the disadvantage of opportunity suffered by working class children in competition with children from the middle class. Still another principal argument is that contact is desirable on the grounds that it will make relations between teacher and taught more humane.

Musgrave (1975) refers to the Plowden ideology which justifies closer contact between parents and teachers on the grounds that the school's main aim, namely the teaching of children, will be fulfilled more efficiently when knowledgeable support comes from the home. Those working from this position want more and better organised meetings with teachers and campaigns to increase membership in school groups especially where parents can learn more about the school programs and methods. Musgrave (1975:4) warns, however, that what should be noted about this type of action is that it assumes that the present structure of the school and its governance will be unchanged and that in the future those outside the school will still have little or no say in what goes on within it.

Strong arguments are presented for the school, firstly to increase parents' interest in, and understanding of, their children's education so as to enable parents to provide the positive support for their children during their school life; and secondly to provide as much information and guidance for parents as possible. Sharrock (1970:43) emphasises that the school not only needs to give information but to receive it, for the teachers' understanding of children's problems, learning difficulties and aspirations will be greater if they know more about their pupils' home backgrounds and have more opportunities for meeting parents and learning from parents themselves some of the questions that are particularly of concern. It is suggested that if there are harmonious contacts between school and home, pupils will be less likely to regard their parents and teachers as having conflicting aims for schooling.

Many believe that by increasing parent and community participation the school will be made more responsive to the interests of the people it serves and also this involvement will promote a closer integration of the school and its community. Fein (1971:29) observes that it may be argued on philosophical and moral grounds that parents should play a greater, more positive part in the educational process. He argues that if parents have legal duties with regard to their children's education, then conceivably they also have rights. In addition to those rights at present defined legally, others may include rights to certain information, reasonable access to their children's schools and even a statutory right to representation in the management of schools.

However, in discussing parents rights in education in Australia, Birch (1977:305) observes that legally parents are virtually locked out of an

education system and have access to its schools by permission and not by right. In consequence a number of parent groups throughout Australia are presently advocating that a Charter of Parent Rights be accepted and incorporated into legislation.

The proposed Charter insisted that in the interests of the child, the parent should have the right to be informed, be consulted and be involved in all matters relating to that child's education, including:

1. Access to the principal, teachers and all other professionals involved with the child.
2. Regular reports on the progress of the child and the right of reply.
3. The right to express and have taken into account, a viewpoint on any educational experience by the school which affects the child's educational or social development.
4. The right to be consulted, and to have counsel of their own selection, in any assessment for placement, either in special or general educational setting.
5. The right to withdraw the child from a course to which the parent has a conscientious objection.
6. The right of representation, either by election by all parents involved or by nomination through the National, State or local school parent organisation, to all decision making bodies.

Besides arguments favouring participation because of the rights and democratic responsibility of the parent, and because of the positive influence on pupil achievement, other advantages are also given. It is claimed that participation will:

- increase parent's understanding of children's education.
- supplement efforts of the school staff in education.
- contribute toward the individualisation of instruction and evaluation of pupils in schools.
- develop parent leadership and education.
- increase understanding and support for educational projects on the part of parents.
- facilitate communication between the school, parent and the community.
- avoid crises in the schools.
- create goodwill and mutual esteem between teachers and parents.
- increase the awareness of parent and community problems and expectations of education on the part of school personnel.
- promote educational accountability to the public.

Safran (1974) has suggested that teachers required particular competencies to successfully facilitate parent and community participation in schools. These include the ability to understand and overcome barriers to open communication between teacher and parent; to engage in one-to-one

communication with parents in a variety of settings so that parents' competence in involvement is maximised; to interpret various educational and institutional practices to parents of various backgrounds; to define and explain specific tasks for parents in their roles as educators of their own children; to bring individual parents together and facilitate their addressing and resolving common problems; and to work with parent groups and develop the leadership skills of their members.

Models of Participation

In attempts to clarify the concepts involved when studying participation in education, a number of authors have presented various frameworks of the nature and degree of participation.

Acknowledging Beare's observation (1977b:15) that "it is a mistake to assume that everyone wants to participate; and even more of a mistake is to assume that everyone wants to participate in all respects and at every level", Taylor (1976:9) presents a broad framework for the analysis of participation, which is set out in Table 1. He suggests the following three facets of participation with the sections of each having a relationship with all in the other two facets.

TABLE 1

FACETS OF PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

Persons	*Activities*	*Level*
• citizens	• objectives	• state
• interest	• structures and procedures	• region
• parents	• resource allocation	• area
• students	• curriculum	• community
• teachers	• personnel	• institution
• administrators	• accountability	• teaching unit

Diener (1972:188) developed five principles for activities in parent and teacher contact:

i Activities should involve students, parents, and school representatives in a long range planned communications program, relevant short range planned involvements and information interaction.

ii Activities should contribute to the education of the students by making information about each child and resources of places, materials, and personnel available for use in the school's instructional program.

iii Activities should contribute to the intellectual development of students and to the operation of the school.

iv Parents should reinforce implementation of the instructional process through supportive attitudes and by giving overt support to the instructional program.

v Successful activities are dependent upon the teacher's provision for a friendly atmosphere in which the individual differences of parents should be accepted.

Pomfret (1972: 115) identifies three categories of school activities in which parents can participate. These are service, student instruction and decision-making. Fantini (1973: 183) identifies five areas: contact for public relations in which the school provides only controlled information about the school to parents; contact for instructional support which involves parents in the direct affairs of the school through such efforts as school volunteers, teachers' aides and business, industrial, cultural programs; contact for community problems and programs; contact for accountability and school governance.

Arnstein (1969) has developed a model of the style of citizen participation. Although the model is derived from three U.S. social programs — urban renewal, anti poverty and model cities —— the typology has proved useful in analysing parent contact and parent participation (Carroll, 1976; Davies, 1977). Carroll (1976: 35) has related to education Arnstein's ladder of participation and this is presented in Table 2 below. The styles present a continuum from the bottom rung, described as parent manipulation, to the top rung of citizen control.

TABLE 2

LADDER OF PARENT CONTACT AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

	Participation Level	*Educational Equivalent*
CITIZEN POWER	Citizen control	Free schools, complete community control
	Delegated power	Community control of specific areas, e.g. personnel
	Partnership	Joint policy boards
TOKEN REPRESENTATION	Placation	Citizens on board of control
	Consulting	Local community hearings, surveys, needs assessment
	Informing	Public relations practices — media bulletin, letters
NO PARTICIPATION	Therapy	Parent educational programs
	Manipulation	Token advisory boards dominated by professionals

Litwak and Meyer (1974: 15) suggest a model of parent involvement in schools which is characterised by the locked door/open door/balanced door positions of the school and its community. The locked door approach aims to maximise the functional autonomy of the school and the assumption is that the school should be allowed to proceed with minimum interference. The open door approach intends to bring parents into the school, thereby helping to integrate school and community.

Litwak and Meyer then present a balanced door postion which lies between these two approaches. It is a position which seeks to avoid, first, an excessive integration of school and community which may on the one

hand prove to be parochial and stultifying and, on the other, may threaten professional standards; and second, to avoid undue isolation which may prevent the interchange of ideas and mutual understanding.

Other conceptual analyses of the relationship of the school to the home and the community have also been undertaken. Corwin (1965) and McGivney and Moynihan (1972) investigated a local-cosmopolitan dichotomy of the school and the community and Fessler (1975) analysed the levels of contact and involvement in school and community consolidation.

The Schools Commission (1975: 113) presented a hierarchy of four levels of community involvement in education in Australia.

i Parents were not seen as having an educational role in the school and the influence of their educational role at home was often ignored. This traditional "Fortress" model limits the learning process to only the teachers and students within the school.

ii The school concentrated on promoting communication between parents and teachers with a view to improving the learning experience of the child. This level took as its basis the known interest of parents in their own children's education and the belief that achievement will be greatly influenced by parental interest and knowledge of the learning process.

iii Opportunities existed for the various participants to reach agreement on educational values and objectives through continuing dialogue.

iv Initiatives were undertaken which might change the nature of the school itself in order to involve the school in the process of social change. Teachers, parents and students became involved in the process of learning and there is general acceptance of the need for all to understand and influence the school as an important instrument of social intervention.

The Commission suggested that the majority of Australian schools could be described in terms of the first or second level, with only a few at the third and a very small minority at level four.

Background to Participation in Decision-making

The observation by Davies (1977: 1) that in the United States "the patterns of parent participation in schools in the mid-1970's are both contradictory and confusing" highlights the very individualistic and interpersonal nature of the concept. It is a theme echoed in the Green Paper on education in England (Williams, 1977: 38), in the 1976 New Zealand report, *Towards Partnership* (Department of Education, 1976: 29), and in the Australian Schools Commission reports.

In Australia it has been acknowledged (Butts, 1955: 16; Partridge, 1968: 67); Fitzgerald, 1974: 1) that because of the centralist form of the state education systems, the nature and amount of parent involvement is more limited than in other, more decentralised systems. However, even

between Australian states there has always existed considerable differences, particularly in relation to parent and community participation in school decision-making, with South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and the A.C.T. providing some form of representative advisory councils. Other differences between systems in regard to parent participation in government schools relate to the degree of decentralisation within the education systems and the amount of involvement in the various areas of school-based decision-making.

Decision-making in ACT Government Schools

The Interim ACT Schools Authority was established in late 1973 to administer education in the ACT after the transfer from the NSW Department of Education in January 1974. In 1977 the ACT Schools Authority Ordinance formally established the Schools Authority and school boards for each school.

The Schools Authority is the policy-making body for the system and is charged with the duty to established and conduct pre-schools, primary and high schools and secondary colleges in the ACT. The membership of the Authority is the Chief Executive Officer and members representing P&C associations (2), pre-school organisations (1), teachers (3), the ACT Legislative Assembly (2) and the community, as Ministerial nominees (6).

Each primary school, high school and secondary college has a school board. Each board consists of the principal and two teachers of the school, three representatives of the local Parents & Citizens Association, a member appointed by the Schools Authority and, in the case of secondary schools, two student members of the school (ACT Schools Authority, 1978). The ACT Schools Authority Ordinance 1976 sets out a number of functions for school boards. They are:

1. To determine the educational policies to be implemented at the school.
2. To assess, from time to time, the needs of the school in relation to the provision of buildings and facilities, equipment, funds, teachers, and other staff, and make recommendations to the Authority with respect to the meeting of those needs.
3. To determine the purposes for which funds made available for the school are to be expended.
4. To make recommendations to the Authority in respect of the use of the buildings, facilities, and equipment of the school for purposes other than school purposes.
5. To develop relationships between the school and the community and between the school and community organisations.
6. To make recommendations to the Authority on matters relating to the school.
7. Such other functions as the Authority confers upon the board.

Grant (1977: 14) observed that, with the introduction of school boards, some principals viewed community involvement in the control of schools as placing undue strain on the school, and themselves in a difficult

and invidious position. Some classroom teachers resented the additional demands on their time for parent consultation and the apparent threat to their career structure.

Some parents, on the other hand, maintained that they felt threatened by the 'superior' air of teachers and felt that they were intruders in a field of experts.

NSW Government Schools

A review of participation in government schools in NSW may be divided into three broad stages.

The first period, until about 1905, was one in which the main concern was to establish a system of state schools available to all children in NSW. For the major part of this time, there was a real concern that many parents did not wish their children to attend school, or that the parents themselves wished to be involved in education. Attempts to establish local participation, through school boards, was the administrative action which best characterises the nature of contact during this period.

Parent participation in NSW government schools, through the medium of school boards, was unsuccessful during the last century for a number of reasons. The government, through the National Board, the Council of Education and the Department of Public Instruction, always owned the schools, controlled the finances and retained executive power. School boards in NSW never had the same degree of autonomy or power as their New Zealand or Victorian counterparts. They were never elected bodies, nor did they have the right to employ teachers or other staff, or control expenditure in any form. Fitzgerald (1975: 19) notes that bureaucratic central control of education fitted in well with the egalitarian spirit of the developing nation in which the people generally expected the government to provide essential services which would not prove profitable in a new, scattered community.

The beginning of the second period coincides with the formation of parent and citizen groups at schools. Local boards ceased to function effectively and were finally abolished in 1936 and formal but limited status was given to the Parent and Citizens Associations and Infants Mothers Clubs. During this time, parents through their associations, played a vital role in financially supporting schools and, on a number of occasions, joint action with their teacher organisations brought about changes in educational policy. This second stage ended by 1973. It is identified with parents forming local associations and state federations, but largely viewing their role in education as providing material support. The operation of parent organisations within individual schools remained reserved to the approval of school principals.

The third period for participation in education in NSW commenced in 1973. By January 1973, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and the ACT had either established school advisory boards or were considering formal avenues by which parents and the community could become closer involved in education. However, in NSW there had been little public discussion of

any aspect of community involvement except cooperation between the teachers' and parents' federations to press for a public enquiry into education and for increased federal and state funding for education.

Although there was an absence of any preceding public discussions or announcements, in January 1973 the Minister for Education announced Cabinet approval in principle of greater community participation in educational decision-making and asked for a discussion paper to be prepared by the Department of Education (Willis, 1973: 1). A consultative paper was published in May 1973 which advocated school councils comprised of a majority of parent members and with responsibilities for the management of school property, developing advice on financial and educational matters and influencing staff appointments.

A broadly representative committee was subsequently established by the Minister to prepare draft recommendations. The committee made its recommendations in the report *The Community and the Schools* which was published in July 1974. The report supported the view that each school and its community should decide whether there should be a local school board and that staffing of schools should be undertaken on a decentralised regional basis. However, none of the recommendations were implemented.

While school boards have often been proposed as one form of parents and teacher involvement in decision-making at the school level in NSW there has been considerable discussion on the manner of parent participation in education at the state level.

For many years the NSW Teachers' Federation has actively pursued a policy for the establishment of a separate governing authority for education, an education commission, which would be concerned with educational policy and control of staff.

In August 1976, the Minister for Education established a Working Party involving administrators, teachers and parents, to draw up recommendations for the establishment of the Education Commission. Following reports by the Working Party, a Bill was introduced into the NSW Parliament in November 1979 to establish an Education Commission.

The Commission will consist of a full-time chairman, the Director General of Education and the Director General of Technical Education, three elected teacher representatives, two elected representatives from parent organisation, and five nominees of the Minister.

The Commission will be responsible for the employment and salaries of teachers in government schools and technical colleges. The Commission will also advise the Minister for Education on policies concerning public education in NSW (NSW Government, 1979). The Commission will not have responsibility for non-government education.

Surveys of Participation

Since 1976 the authors have undertaken a number of comparative studies on participation in schools — NSW Government Schools; ACT School

Authority Schools and Colleges; NSW Catholic Schools; NSW Private (Non-Catholic) Schools.

As there have been but a few studies conducted in Australia on any aspects of participation in education, this has necessitated a reliance on British and American literature, in the main, as the basis for discussion. However, Ebel (1969: 2439) has suggested that good reasons exist for presuming that expectations about schooling vary from country to country as a result of different educational values, goals and procedures.

Not only is there likely to be considerable differences between countries in the degree and nature of parental participation, but it is inappropriate to even regard the Australian states as similar. Certainly the situation in NSW cannot be equated to Victoria where most studies on parent and teacher contact have been undertaken (Fitzgerald, 1974; Fitzgerald et al, 1976; Fitzgerald, 1977). At a time when proposals for parent involvement in school decision-making were being rejected in NSW, wider representation and greater authority were given to school councils in Victoria.

The general aim of the studies was to discover the nature and extent of parent participation in the several school systems and to study the relationship between this and various teacher, school and neighbourhood variables. Further insight was sought in the following areas:

1. The provision made by schools for participation by parents and the extent to which parents make use of these.
2. The teacher's level of satisfaction with existing and proposed means of participation by parents.

The Samples

For each survey group a randomised proportional sample was established taking into account a) size, level and geographical location of the schools, and b) status, age, sex, teacher training and teaching experience of the teachers.

TABLE 3

THE SAMPLES

	NSW GOV.	ACT	NSW RC	NSW PRIVATE
Principals	84	60	44	9
Teachers	229	286	62	18
Total	313	346	106	27

Amount of Contact

Teachers were asked to indicate the number of mothers and fathers of children they taught that they had met during the year. For those who were principals, counsellors or in non-teaching positions, the question asked the number of parents of children at the school with whom they had had contact.

TABLE 4

AMOUNT OF CONTACT WITH PARENTS

		NSW GOV.	ACT	NSW RC	NSW PRIVATE
WITH MOTHERS	Principals	46%	40%	80%	95%
	Teachers	50%	50%	70%	70%
WITH FATHERS	Principals	18%	25%	50%	70%
	Teachers	12%	27%	30%	25%

Table 4 indicates the proportion of parents whom teachers met. A detailed analysis of the data shows that there is considerable range in the numbers of mothers and fathers met by teachers, that many parents do not have contact with the teacher, particularly in the secondary and particularly with counsellors, that teachers in small schools and teachers in school executive positions are likely to have greater contact with both mothers and fathers, and that mothers are far more likely to meet with teachers across all grades than are fathers. It is also evident that in NSW, the higher levels of parent and teacher contact occur with the non-government schools.

Parents at the School

The literature provides little evidence of what takes place when parents come to the school. Fitzgerald et al (1976: 107) have commented that in the Australian context, the parent usually comes to school in response to some trouble that the child may be in.

Thirteen topics were presented which parents may have discussed in meetings with the teacher. The respondents were asked to identify the topic of most interest.

TABLE 5

PROPORTION OF TEACHERS IDENTIFYING TOPIC AS OF MOST CONCERN

TOPIC	NSW GOV.	ACT	NSW RC	NSW PRIVATE
School Curriculum	4%	7%	7%	12%
Homework	12%	12%	18%	16%
Teaching Methods	4%	5%	6%	3%
Classwork	25%	30%	32%	21%
Other Teachers	1%	1%	1%	—
Examinations	7%	4%	6%	5%
Discipline	7%	5%	3%	10%
Child's Future	11%	12%	8%	16%
Child and Teachers	6%	4%	2%	3%
School Buildings	3%	2%	—	—
Attendance	2%	1%	—	—
Child's Inhibitions	17%	7%	8%	12%
Problems at Home	1%	10%	9%	5%

Table 5 reports the percentage of the samples who identified each topic as of most concern to parents. While all topics were seen as most important by at least some respondents, the four topics of "classwork", "homework", "the child's future" and "the child's inhibitions" received most support. There were also some differences between systems. The responses from NSW Private Schools gave considerably more emphasis to the topics of "discipline", "the child's future" and with NSW Catholic Schools, "homework". The responses from the NSW Government Schools highlighted "the child's inhibitions" while the ACT sample and NSW Catholic School responses gave a priority to the topic of "problems at home".

Table 6 illustrates the major activities of parent participation as indicated by the teachers. The topics in italics are those which may be regarded as providing parents with some involvement in decision making. The numbers reported are the percentage of teachers indicating the aspects of involvement took place at their school — for each sample the most popular responses are highlighted.

TABLE 6

TEACHERS INDICATING ASPECT OF INVOLVEMENT AT THEIR SCHOOL

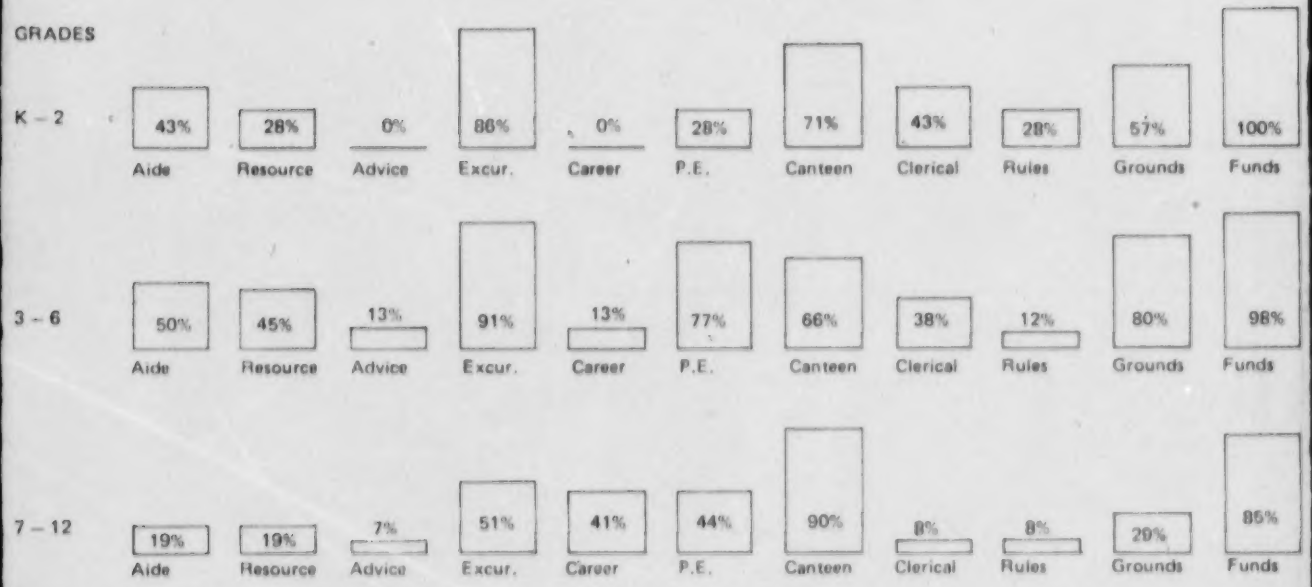
	NSW GOV	ACT	NSW RC	NSW PRIVATE
Working as Voluntary Aide	38%	68%	55%	56%
Curriculum Resource Person	34	60	25	67
Advice on Topics Studied	11	52	14	44
Excursions	75	75	82	67
Careers' Information	23	22	25	44
Sport	50	65	75	44
Canteen	76	82	89	67
Clerical Assistance	27	63	75	56
School Rules	10	30	18	22
Maintenance	61	23	70	56
Fund Raising	87	83	84	89
Pressure Group	2	65	30	33
School Planning	2	58	43	78
Teaching Special Groups	1	46	39	44
School Board/Council	0	100	39	89

Most activities were concerned directly with raising finance for the school and a number of the other activities could be regarded as parents providing voluntary assistance for which the school would otherwise have had to employ additional staff (e.g. clerical assistance, care of grounds, help with excursions). Only three of the aspects noted above — assisting with sport, teachers' aides, resources person — could be regarded as having a direct link with the educational program of the school and thus allowing parents to interact with the teacher and also gain insight into the educational program. In general it was evident that the lowest level of participation in school programs occurred in NSW government schools with the ACT and Private Schools having the highest levels overall.

Not only did those aspects of participation which were most common in schools appear not to encourage parent contact with teachers but they were of a nature which made little allowance for advice or decision-making by parents. Activities which did permit more direct involvement received limited support. Diagram 1, which relates to the NSW Government School sample, indicates the general tendency for participation in school programs to vary according to grade level.

DIAGRAM 1

PERCENT OF TEACHERS BY GRADE LEVEL IN NSW GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS INDICATING FORM OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT THEIR SCHOOL



Teacher Attitude to Present Parental Participation

Teachers were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagreed with statements which described the existing parent participation at their school. The items were answered by choosing one of the five categories — Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

The following were the aspects of teacher's opinion on participation surveyed:

1. Parents' interest in the school
2. The relationship of parent participation and the child
3. Effectiveness of the school's communication with parents
4. Teachers' reactions to aspects of contact with parents.

The percentage of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with each item and those indicating that they were uncertain are given in the following tables.

TABLE 7

DEGREE OF TEACHER AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS CONCERNING PARENTAL INTEREST IN THE SCHOOL

	NSW GOV.	ACT	NSW RC	NSW PRIVATE
The majority of Parents are interested in little else in Education apart from their Child's Progress	76%	80%	76%	72%
Parents prefer Minimum Contact with Teachers	52	50	56	22
Parents who come to the School generally there to complain	27	53	21	39
Parents feel overawed by Educational Matters	62	42	55	39
Parents have Difficulty coming to School	58	41	42	33

The majority of teachers considered that parents were not concerned with a range of educational issues beyond the progress of their child, that parents were confused by educational matters, that parents have difficulty in meeting the teacher and that most parents prefer to have minimum contact with teachers (Table 7). Also, most teachers reported that while parents did not generally pay them compliments, it was even more unusual for the parent to come to school to complain. The inference would be that teachers consider that parents generally feel uncertain about education matters apart from specific issues of their child's education and prefer limited contact with the school.

A detailed analysis of the data revealed significantly more secondary teachers held the view that parents did not want contact, that parents came

to the school to complain, that parents felt overawed by educational matters, and that parents had difficulty in visiting the school. This last view was also related to teachers in those schools with neighbourhoods characterised by higher levels of unskilled workers and non-English speaking residents.

TABLE 8

TEACHER OPINION ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENT AND TEACHER CONTACT AND THE CHILD

ITEM	NSW GOV.	ACT	NSW RC	NSW PRIVATE
Criticism of the teacher by the parent often results in the teacher acting unfavourably towards the child	22%	15%	18%	17%
Consulting with the parent acts as a means of disciplining the child	71%	58%	82%	67%
Most pupils like parents to talk to the teacher	45%	57%	57%	44%

With teachers generally holding the view that most parents have the welfare of their child as their singular interest in education, it is relevant to consider what influence teachers believe that their contact with parents has on the pupil. Responses to three items on this aspect are reported in Table 8. These indicate that a strong majority of teachers believe that contact with the parent is an effective means of resolving a pupil's discipline problem and that, irrespective of criticism by the parent, the teacher does not let this affect his relationship with the pupil.

A range of 40-72% across the samples accepted that school newsletters created parent interest in the school (Table 9), while the school's Parent and Citizen Association was not presently considered an effective means of achieving closer contact. This view regarding the Association was positively related to the grade level of the teacher and to the school size. However, older teachers, and those with greater contact with parents, considered the parent Association effective.

TABLE 9

DEGREE OF TEACHER AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS CONCERNING EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION

	NSW GOV.	ACT	NSW RC	NSW PRIVATE
The School's Parent Association is generally effective in achieving better relations between Parents and the School	39%	28%	31%	28%
Newsletters and Bulletins sent home make Parents more interested in School	55%	40%	60%	72%

The item gaining most support was the proposition that the more informal meetings between parents and teachers are the most beneficial (Table 10). Between 85-91% of respondents across the samples agreed to this. However, there was a negative correlation between the item and the teacher's grade level. A majority of teachers also agreed with the view that teachers were able to affect the parent's views on education, and that in discussion with parents teachers did not feel intimidated.

Respondents were asked whether there had been serious difficulties concerning parent or community use of school facilities. The view that there had not been difficulties was significantly supported by teachers in schools with greater degrees of contact. The school neighbourhood variables of stability of population, non-English speaking residents and proportion of the workforce in secondary industry were negatively correlated to support for the statement.

TABLE 10

DEGREE OF TEACHER AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS RELATING TO ASPECTS OF PARTICIPATION

	NSW GOV.	ACT	NSW RC	NSW PRIVATE
The more informal meetings between Parents and Teachers are the most beneficial	85%	86%	61%	78%
Most Teachers have little contact with the local community	50%	71%	50%	72%
No serious problems with Parent use of School Facilities	70%	66%	79%	56%

The main results from the items on present participation were that most teachers preferred informal contact with parents, but they believed that parents were reluctant to have close relations with the school and that parents felt confused with many of the broader issues in education. Teachers believed that the parents almost sole interest in education was their child. The school's Parent and Citizen Association was not considered effective in achieving better contact between parents and teachers. The teacher's opinions were generally significantly related to their age and teaching experience, grade level taught and the number of parents with whom they had contact. In most instances, the responses were not significantly related to school neighbourhood variables except the occupation level of the workforce.

Teacher Attitude to Future Parental Participation

In order to study the attitude of teachers to contact with parents a scale was developed of 16 statements which were hypothesised to assess this attitude.

Table 11 below indicates the proportion of the total sample agreeing with six attitude statements for which significant results were obtained. Approximately half of the items indicated a positive response to the attitude object and the remainder were negative statements.

Teachers held strongly to a number of views. They believed that teachers should be more active in communicating with parents and that parents should receive more information from the school. As well, they strongly rejected the views that parents should not become more involved in education.

All groups supported the increased involvement in education of the school's parent organisation, however the Private School sample did not agree that the parent organisation should be used to solve school problems. Also, the Private School sample with respondents from the Government Schools were strongly in favour of limiting parent involvement in school policy making.

TABLE 11

DEGREE OF TEACHER AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS RELATING TO ATTITUDES TO PARTICIPATION

	NSW GOV.	ACT	NSW RC	NSW PRIVATE	NZ GOV.
The School's Parent Organisation should become more involved in Education	76%	84%	85%	89%	86%
The School's Parent Organisation should be used to help solve School problems	59	55	50	33	77
Parents should receive more information about their Child's Education	75	69	73	56	73
Parents should not become more involved in Education than at present	14	13	10	11	9
An increase in Parent participation would not assist the Pupil	15	12	11	28	9
Parents should not be involved in determining School policy	42	14	26	56	9

Further analysis showed that the proportion of teachers who indicated an "Uncertain" response to the items in Table 11 ranged from 4% to 21%. On the one hand this may indicate that many teachers found the statements imprecise or ambiguous. However, because of the detailed item scaling and trialling, it is more probable that "Uncertain" validly represents the attitude of many teachers to many aspects of parent and teacher contact.

Table 12 refers to the perceptions of teachers in ACT Schools regarding the degree of success achieved by school boards in that system in

developing greater parental involvement. A significantly high degree of uncertainty was revealed together with a low level of agreement by classroom teachers that boards had been successful in developing closer involvement.

TABLE 12

DEGREE OF TEACHER AGREEMENT CONCERNING EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL BOARDS IN ACT SCHOOLS

	Principals	*Teachers*
The School Board has been successful in developing greater parent involvement	43% (17% uncertain)	21% (30% uncertain)

Conclusion

Diagram 2 provides a schematic comparative analysis of the salient aspects of involvement in education as reported in previous sections of the paper.

The overall impression one receives from the investigation is that teachers work in relative isolation from parents. For those who wish to increase parent participation in schools, perhaps the most important implications of this are that parents and teachers may maintain misconceptions of the attitude, and even the role, of the other in education. This in turn may promote a degree of tension and conflict and in itself act in detriment to further contact.

The results give some indication of the teachers' own reasons for wanting participation. From the data, two points in particular seem worthy of comment. One is that teachers are confident that the failure of some parents to come to the school resulted largely from the parents' own problems. However, they also believe that the school could be more active in communicating with parents. The second is that teachers view the parent's role largely as facilitators of the school's work and attach limited importance to possible direct parental involvement in decision-making at the school.

Overall, the study results have suggested that the area of parent participation is a complex one, but it seems highly unlikely that the scale of participation in most schools is adequate to achieve those objectives which were suggested previously as important reasons for parental involvement in education.

In a society which is committed, although haltingly, to greater parental participation, the findings of the study show goodwill and a considerable degree of indecision on the part of the teacher, combined nevertheless with an appreciation of the need for gradual change.

However, this raises the issue which Davies (1977: 25) identifies as perhaps the most interesting and difficult question about parental participation: Are the relatively weak avenues for participation doing more harm than good?

DIAGRAM 2

COMPARATIVE SUMMARY

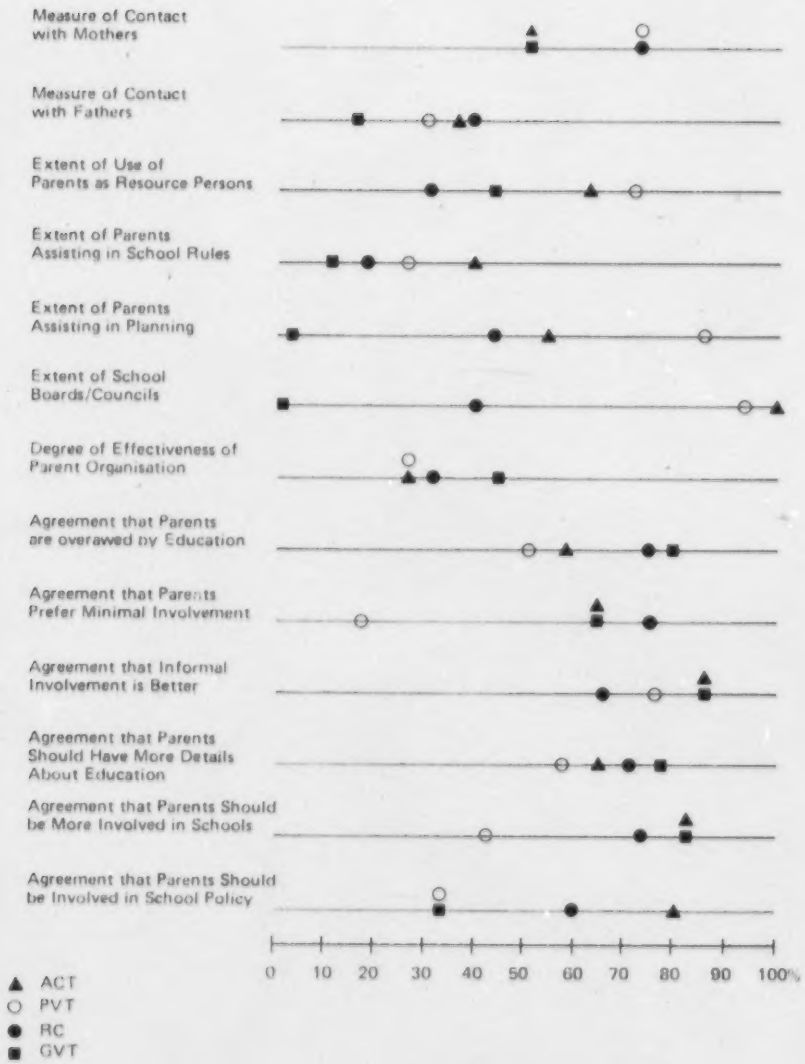

Measure of Contact with Mothers
Measure of Contact with Fathers
Extent of Use of Parents as Resource Persons
Extent of Parents Assisting in School Rules
Extent of Parents Assisting in Planning
Extent of School Boards/Councils
Degree of Effectiveness of Parent Organisation
Agreement that Parents are overawed by Education
Agreement that Parents Prefer Minimal Involvement
Agreement that Informal Involvement is Better
Agreement that Parents Should Have More Details About Education
Agreement that Parents Should be More Involved in Schools
Agreement that Parents Should be Involved in School Policy
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100%
▲ ACT
○ PVT
● RC
■ GVT

DIAGRAM 3

THOUGHTS TO PONDER ON ???

"ARE THE RELATIVELY WEAK AVENUES FOR PARTICIPATION DOING MORE HARM THAN GOOD?"

MORE HARM	OR	MORE GOOD
• Public Relations only • Creates credibility gap between School and Public • May alienate Parents • Even shams of participation cost time, money and energy		• Can develop into stronger and more influential forms • Any participation may be educative to participants • Develop skills of planning, organising and leading

As would be expected there is no clear answer to this question, or an easy way of finding one. Reducing forms of participation to a shell or a sham serves the interest of preserving intact the democratic mythology of participation. Such action may also seem to serve the immediate public relations needs of the school or school system, but subsequently it may increase the credibility gap between the institution and its public.

The possibility must be faced that manipulated or weak forms of participation will alienate parents and the community. Furthermore, even shams of participation cost both the institution and the participants time, money and energy. These resources are in short supply and obviously must not be squandered on meaningless exercises.

On the positive side of the question is the possibility that weak forms of participation with little influence can develop into stronger and more influential forms. Participation, it can be argued, can be educative to the participants. The skills of planning, organizing and leading can be developed and these skills can be used to develop influence.

It can be argued that democracy is contagious and cumulative and will spread from one form of participation to another and from one area of civic life to another. Hence, it may be better to have some access to influence than none at all.

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POLITICS IN EDUCATION: CONCLUDING ADDRESS

H. SILVER

I would like first of all to address myself very quickly to the main conference themes that I have detected and to make some brief comments. The first is that it seemed to me at the beginning that there was at least some doubt to be had about the wisdom of the way in which the themes were introduced. I was not sure that equity was the right way to begin a conference on Politics in Education. I was not sure that the transition from that to financial and then to social accountability was clear and I sensed some sharing of unease about that and then the transition to decision-making today. My view now is that that series of transitions has worked a great deal better than I expected it to at the beginning. The discussion of equity brought a number of issues very squarely to the centre of the stage and drew attention to a series of problems revolving around inequalities, around social and cultural differences and their implications for politics and for education, around competition for resources and the criteria on which the conflict arising from that competition for resources might be resolved. That in fact did seem to me to present a number of very clear openings into the terrain that the conference was intended to explore. The financial accountability discussion then seemed to me to raise quite specific Australian issues about the distribution of powers within the Commonwealth but also it raised some more generalisable issues about the setting of educational objectives. This proved to be a major aspect of that discussion, and of a discussion of what is particular, what is special, what is different, if there is anything special and different about Australian education in the context of a discussion of politics. That seemed to me to fit very snugly with the discussions that we had begun. The issues of social accountability then touched on some sensitive areas of educator/politician, educator/public issues relationships and the nature of the strategies that are open to us as educators in looking at the problems that all of that raises. Then finally the discussion of decision-making brought us more directly into a number of policy processes, the political effects on educational policies and institutions and the influence in the reverse directions.

Surrounding all of those issues there has inevitably been a sense of the economics and financial constraints which surround the discussion both here in Australia and in most other advanced industrial countries. I think that we have all sensed during the discussion of these themes that against that economic and financial background there are new attitudes to be explored, including the new conservatism the new approaches to public spending, for example, which are common to Australia and Britain, and the new kinds of responses that need to be made in that setting. That briefest of summaries of the conference shows how widely we have ranged, and some people may have felt that we have ranged too widely. This does seem to me to underline one very important fact that emerges from this conference, that is that the equation between education and politics is not

a simple one, and one is forced in considering both sides of that equation to consider some extremely elusive definitions and realities. The two cannot be put together in a very simple-minded way. We have not discussed what we mean by education and we were not here to do that. What we did discuss was a number of political sub-themes to the main item on the agenda, and we have learned, if we were not already sure of the point, that politics is not just a question of the legislature and of the activities of the politicians at election times, the confrontation of manifestos and of ideologies. Politics is a much more complex, much more messy, sometimes threatening, certainly multi-faceted and multi-levelled, activity — which is very difficult to approach but which we cannot wish out of existence. It is increasingly there in the patterns of activities that all of us in our different kinds of educational activity are engaged with. So we have come at the question of politics from different directions, we have explored a number of different parts of the territory, and my overall judgement is that the sequence and the style of discussion have been right and appropriate to the theme and to the moment in Australian history at which it has been debated.

I felt myself a little uneasy in that almost all the contributors to this discussion have been economists or political scientists, philosophers, auditors, accountants and a whole series of people who come to the analysis from the social and political sciences, intent on making and able to make elegant maps and models of the territory and extremely helpfully too. But I have been anticipating the moment when, essentially as a historian, I was going to have to make some kind of sense of the debates which people from these diverse backgrounds had inaugurated — and I should like to come back to that point later. Some people have indicated how recently in fact the discussion of education in a political context has become acceptable and against what resistance that discussion has been taking place. I have been interested in listening to this discussion not only in the perceptions which seem to me to have been shared by archbishops and governors-general and auditors-general and conference members — shared perceptions of the relevance of discussing education in a political context. I have also been interested in the phenomenon itself — that is the changes that have taken place over the last ten to twenty years and which have led to the possibility of the education/politics equation assuming the importance that its done at this conference.

It seems to me that the discussion of education over the last two or three decades has been dominated by a discussion from the standpoint of psychology and even with the waning of the influence of psychology in the 1950's and 1960's in most countries the interest was able to revive among other reasons because of the work of Piaget and of the interest in humanistic psychology in the United States. Psychology has been if you like the pioneer educational science, but increasingly in the 1950's and 1960's it was superseded by, was pushed off stage by, sociology — especially in the United Kingdom against a background of the exploration of social class which is an inescapable focus of British educational analysis. Sociology there and then in the United States begins against the background of developments in civil rights movements, in other movements for minority, women

and other interests. Often in the guise of urban sociology or urban studies, sociology became essential to the discussion of education. Economics of education again in the 1960's and 1970's, initially against a background of affluence, of trying to understand the impact of the increasing educational resources being made available, became an educational discipline and educational research base with increasing importance in Britain and the United States.

And then we come to politics. Politics of education, in the 1970's and I suspect increasingly in the 1980's against the kind of background with which this conference has become familiar, has become an important part of the canon of educational discussion. And although, as many people have reminded us, politics of education was around with Aristotle and the Greeks, nevertheless the revival, the renewal of politics as an educational context is something that is relatively new and in my view is going to become increasingly important. That part of it which I would predict is going to be of most importance to people engaged in academic and educational pursuits is the area of policy studies, which Greg Hancock and Grant Harman, for example, have represented in our discussions here. I find it extremely interesting that this has emerged and become a central feature of discussions at your College of Education conference, and I think that the decision to make it so central is historically going to be seen to have been an important decision.

Against the background of the main themes I have tried to touch on there have been a series of sub-themes, which have created some difficulties because they have not all been discussed here in plenary session. They have been scattered in concurrent sessions and it has been difficult for most people, I suspect, to get a sense of the total range of the sub-themes that have become important in the overall pattern of the discussion. I have found this difficult although I have had an opportunity to see most of the papers that were presented at those sessions. But the meetings which, in apparent isolation, have considered questions, for example, of the nature of conservatism or the relationship between community involvement and school decision-making, multi-cultural education and the women's movement, seem to me need to be encompassed in order to understand the significance of the discussions at this conference. This is so because politics is not only about accountability and equity and decision-making — it is about these other related sub- and in some cases supra-topics which in my view have rightly been placed within the context of the conference and which we need to see as an integral part of the discussions that have taken place here. My recommendation to those people who may come away wondering what the concurrent sessions really have contributed to the conference centrally is to read those papers. I think I have understood the conference the better for having done so and I think that it is important that they should not be seen as peripheral to the discussions that we have been having.

I think that it is important therefore that there have been all these various explorations of the terrain. I think that there have been some initial difficulties in getting to grips with what equity meant and what the

conference was actually about in any concentrated sense. If there have been difficulties in seeing the transition from one topic to another and their relationships I think that the conference has delivered what it set out to deliver. Let me for a moment just take the two main themes that we have been discussing. I do not want to go over the ground that the discussions of equity and accountability have covered but there are just one or two comments that I would like to make. On the question of equity, firstly, I have been left unconvinced that that is the right concept for us to have been discussing. Behind the discussions that Greg Hancock introduced is a sense of pervasive inequalities and attempts to find the right kind of action, the right kind of strategies for any serious approach to those inequalities to have meaning, to be successful. The real distinctions that he was trying to get at were distinctions of social inequality looked at in a political framework, and if we are talking about inequalities then we are also talking about the concept of equality still. That concept has not disappeared from the vocabulary of Western Europe and the United States. We are still talking about positive discrimination. If you start by talking about inequalities within the context of our societies there is no way of escaping the concept of what the Americans have called reverse and the British have called positive discrimination, attempts to compensate in one way or another. Those concepts have aroused enormous controversy, have been abandoned, have been picked up again, and are still on the agenda. Equity seems to me to belong in the realm of the discussion of justice, in the realm of discussions about political and legislative structures, but does not provide the same way into notions of action, of curative action, in the way that the other vocabularies do. I am not belittling the discussions that we have had around the notion of equity: I am merely saying is at the end of the discussion I am forced back into the vocabulary of the 1960's and 1970's, into the realities of the 1960's and 1970's, in order to find the kind of tactics and strategies necessary to approach the inequalities which Greg Hancock drew our attention.

In the field of accountability I, and I suspect all of us, have been left with some sense of puzzlement, and in many cases a sense of anxiety at what it is that has happened to us, and we wish it would go away, and it will not go away. We have had a discussion about the pressures, about the anxieties and the responses and the difficulties, and we have been aware of the changes against which we need to perceive the pressures being placed upon us. The changes are demographic, they are financial, they are economic, they are political, they are there and they will become more apparent in the next year, in the next two years and beyond that who knows. What, as educators, we would most like to say has emerged very vividly indeed, and that is that our job as educators is concerned with warmth, with caring, with what we do for our students and for our pupils in our classrooms. The discussion about vertical and downwardly vertical accountability was important because we all of us feel that our major commitment is there in the classroom, in the lecture theatre, in the system we administer or wherever it is that we are.

The cold reality, however, is that the people who are making the major politico-educational decisions are at this moment less interested in

that perception of our roles than in those parts of our work which are measurable. We are being asked increasingly not only to account but to count, to measure in various ways the effectiveness of what it is that we are doing. We are being told: "You care, you feel responsible, you're a nice guy, but we want value for money and the only way we know that we are getting it is not by the smiles on the faces of your children but by something that we can count, measure, evaluate and judge you by." That has been happening in the United States, it is happening in the United Kingdom and I suspect from most of what has been said that it is increasingly going to happen here in Australia. It is not just a question of finding ways of responding to that which do not compromise our ideals, it is also a question of finding ways of responding at a level at which we are capable effectively of conducting a dialogue. It is no good simply listening to the world out there and making noises. We have to present ourselves, we have to represent ourselves. Our occupation, our commitment, are complex. There is no simple way of writing a two-page document to be read in the State legislature which says briefly what education is all about and how we are going to be held accountable for it. It is not that kind of exercise. We have to recognise the complexity and find ways of resisting those pressures which prevent other people from understanding the complexities of the task in which we are engaged.

Let me read you a brief passage from the paper that Don Steele Craik presented to us. I have read and reread these sentences and I invite you to consider them very carefully. They form the crux of his argument and of some of the discussion that followed. "It is generally agreed", he said "that accountability in the context we are considering must originate in an unambiguous understanding of the objectives of the activities concerned . . . government financed education seems to suffer more than most programs from difficulties in defining its objectives." How many of you believe that it is "generally agreed" that accountability must stem from "an unambiguous understanding of the objectives of the activities"? How many of you feel capable of defining the objectives specifically in the way assumed in that sentence? I feel no such confidence. And most of us know how difficult it is to reach consensus even in something like a College of Education where there is something shared. To find these kinds of "unambiguous understandings of objectives" is extraordinarily difficult and they are probably impossible to locate. But then there is the second sentence, which is a denigration of the educators because "education suffers more than most programs from difficulties in defining its objectives". There are two implications of that — either that we need to put our house in order in education which is certainly what Don Steele Craik was implying, or there is something wrong with those other programs. I want to know what kind of social programs they are that can so neatly and clearly define their objectives better than we do as educators, and I am suspicious of the over-confidence of the programs in other territories which are able so easily to locate their objectives and achieve them in some measureable way. That was a form of anxiety which clearly expressed itself in the discussion groups, one of which, in its summary, said this: "Any attempt to rationalise objectives on a national basis, to obtain consensus of what education is all about will be

fraught with danger. Effectiveness accountability increased by government with very clear criteria being laid down could lead to the imposition of educationally undesirable but politically expedient changes." It would be reasonable to say that this group could not regard the Auditor-General's suggestions as being the panacea for the problems raised in the area of financial accountability. I do not wish to suggest that the questions of accountability that he raised are unimportant and are not real. I think we should meet them in the spirit in which they were suggested but I think in presenting the educational endeavour we need to indicate the kind of false assumptions that we detect in some of the arguments that are levelled against us. At the pre-conference Service there was a prayer that all educators should recognise "the need to budget and spend wisely all monies allotted to education and to be accountable for this." I think that at the end of the conference some of us might wish to pray that politicians will hear about it when it happens.

I should like to refer to one or two other dilemmas we have encountered. I am sure that it was a real problem that Grant Harman was drawing attention to when he talked about the difficulty many people have of relating theory to experience. Those of you who have been engaged in teacher education will be familiar with the long and traumatic importance of that formulation. Any kind of model-making and mapping and theorising raises the question of some kind of linkage to the experience of the classroom or of the university or wherever, and there is a genuine and understandable resistance to map-making in which some kind of link is established between the child, the teachers, the classrooom on the one hand, and words like 'power' and 'rule' on the other hand. It seems wrong, it seems almost immoral, to be discussing the relationships, the moments of contact in the classroom between teacher and child in terms of power, but what we have seen is that politics is not something over there in somebody else's territory. The kind of models and the kind of theories that we have been offered do suggest that education is not only connected with politics but is itself a form of politics. I suppose if I were designing this conference afresh I would give it another title — Education as Politics, which seems to me to represent at least some of the discussion that we have been having. But there is a dilemma in seeing the kinds of endeavours we are engaged in day by day in terms which lead us into those kinds of theoretical areas. But historically I am aware that even some of the most apparently politics-free areas of education have been major political battle grounds. If I were writing a history of the curriculum, for example, I would write it as a political text. The struggle to bring science into the nineteenth century grammar and independent school curriculum, the struggle to bring different styles of English and modern subject teaching into the curriculum at different levels in the first decades of the twentieth century, the struggles over social studies (and I don't need to remind you of that one in Queensland) — all of these have been long and sustained — and there is only one word to use — battles. The battle over science, the battle over the balance and length of the curriculum in Britain in the first decade of this century, the models of the curriculum which have fought it out in the schools — these have been political battles, and what I am suggesting is that some if not all of those

areas which look as though they have little to do with politics are in fact essentially areas of political controversy.

Another dilemma relates to my disappointment that I have not heard more discussion about the whole area of professionalism and professionalisation. It has not been absent: it occurs in a number of papers, including Coppel and Henry's paper on patterns of school decision-making, where the clash between professional criteria and community-involvement criteria is quite clearly underlined. I think that we need to understand much more clearly the difficulties in continuing with the interpretations of teacher professionalism that we have been accustomed to in recent decades. I do not want to go into this in detail, but it does seem to me that we have been indulging as teachers and in our teachers' associations in forms of mystification over recent decades. Teachers have in Britain lost important alliances with parents as a result of over-zealous professional guarding of their purity, and my feeling is that these self-defensive postures are no longer adequate. I would be extremely critical of the continuation into the 1980's of discussions based on un-thought-out notions of the professional status and requirements of teachers. Teachers have gone through a large number of zig-zags in the twentieth century in their research for status in their alliance with and opposition to the labour movement in a variety of countries and it is understandable that teachers have tried to see themselves in some kind of clear professional way. I was present at the presentation that Shirley Randell gave on the disadvantaged schools program in the Australian rural areas and it seemed to me, watching a tape, that you can argue that teachers are being *most* effective and *most* professional when they are not closing the doors and barricading themselves in the schools, when they are working within a model of education which is broad enough to encompass a large number of community issues and community involvements — not in some kind of simple-minded way but at a level which recognises that communities have something to offer to schools and schools to communities. There are immense difficulties in operating in that area but the teacher needs to be out there — and by teacher I mean you and me — working in wider definitions of education and of what the teacher's role is all about.

Another dilemma to which I should like to draw attention is that there has been very little discussion of the concept of the 'state' — there has been very little discussion about the Commonwealth/State issue at the conference and I understand why most of you take a large number of the issues for granted and you have not felt it necessary to explain the controversies for the benefit of a visitor. But in what bits of discussion I have heard I felt there to be something absent. There does seem to me to be a great deal of value in the discussion of politics as to what exactly 'the state is, the state in its widest theoretical sense. In Europe and in the United States this is an ongoing discussion amongst social and political scientists — the state is a juggernaut, the state is evil, the state is incomprehensible, the state is the instrument of the ruling class, the state is a whole series of things you can go on listing according to which ideological standpoint you take and there is a great deal of debate about this. I have not heard many ripples of that at this conference, I have not heard people sensing that actually Marxist and non-Marxists and conservatives and anti-conservatives

use the word 'state' with quite different interpretations. I would have liked to hear more about that, particularly as there has been an interesting problem surfacing during this week, reflected in Jim Allen's paper on State/Federal relationships and in John Barrie's paper on conservatism, both of which drew attention to what seems to me a peculiarly Australian position with regard to the state — the tendency towards decentralising policies being conservative and centralising policies being on the whole resisted from the conservative end. That seems to me to be totally different from what I would have expected on the basis of twentieth-century British or American experience, which has been that the conservative position has generally been a centralist one. The identification in American historiography in this century of centralising, bureaucratising capitalism and the state is a central feature of the political and social historian's work in North America and Europe but seems to be absent here, and it may be absent for good reasons. I have felt the lack of it. Ultimately it seems to me that in Australia as in Britain you have to find in any discussion of the state the kind of balance which enables you to handle concepts like the community and the role of parents and the nature of local political environments — all of which you seem to me to have been looking for since Freeman Butts visited you in the 1950's — and to balance all of those against Federal and State involvements. I suppose one of the saddest paragraphs that I encountered in anything written or read this week was the paper by Phil Meade on migrant parents' involvement or lack of it. It illustrates my interest in the whole business of elucidating what we mean when we talk about the balance of activities and participations within the total state:

> "Parents in our study," he writes, "are ill-informed about the school. This is particularly so in the case of immigrant parents. Parents have little contact with school and few are invited to the school for individual discussions. They have learnt their roles of non-participation and non-partnership and keep out of formal education. They do not make a contribution to the defintion of schooling — they allow their interests to be defined by others".

In order to come to terms with that paragraph you have to discuss the parents and the school, but you also have to discuss who it is that defines these parents' interest for them, and at that point you are at the beginning of a discussion of the total educational and political machine, which takes you into an area of analysis of the kinds of state in which we live.

May I just take a moment to award some prizes for a competition for the most depressing comments made at the conference. Phil Meade, whose paragraph I have just read, gets second prize for that very depressing commentary out of his research. Greg Hancock gets third prize for the comment: "the problem is not one of declining enrolments but of declining faith in educational processes and products." The fourth prize goes to Wal Neal, who said, "Australians are not known for their ability to make rational decisions or to assess evidence". But the first prize goes to Jim Allen for the following sentence: "The nature of parliamentary government

in Australia does not hold out great hope for the development of long-term rational, national plans for education or for any other areas."

I would like to make two final and brief sets of comments on the British experience, and on a historical issue.

I have been asked whether, in drawing attention to difficulties in Britain there are positive messages that I can give. I decided that there is not. There are the beginnings of answers. It is possible that one of the most conservative governments that we have had in Britain this century is, like all governments, being pulled a bit towards the centre in relation to its educational policies. Our Department of Education and Science and Her Majesty's Inspectors probably do a good job in taming ministers from left or right, but whether the process is going to take place quickly enough I am not yet certain. There are other ways of thinking about the question, including the role of our professional associations in Britain. I think the real approach to the question, however, is not any positive message that might come out of the British experience but the search for them in Australia's experience. It seems to me you have the possibility of finding answers which we are already looking for but which you have more time in a sense to find successfully. The economic crisis here is not the same as it has been in the United Kingdom and it has not happened as soon as it happened in the United Kingdom. You have international messages available to you that we have not had to the same extent over recent years. You have a base on which to begin to exercise the kind of influence and to conduct the kind of dialogue that you have been talking about at this conference. I have puzzled about the Australian College of Education and what role it plays and can play, whether it is an annual conference that someone like me might drop into, or whether it has some kind of momentum — whether it is capable of translating discussions of the kind that we have had here into other kinds of action. I have to say that as many of you know there is no such organisation in Britain and I wish we had one. I am used to going to conferences regularly in Britain where we are all teachers together or all principals together or all something together and the amount of dialogue that takes place within the educational worksforce is minimal in Britain. The only parallel I can think of in the United States is Phi Delta Kappa; some of it takes place there, and those of you who read the *Kappan* will know the kind of territories they cover. But I now wish we had an English College of Education of the kind you have here, because in looking at the sort of problems that I have raised and looking ahead towards these crucial issues of policy which are going to need serious discussion over the new few years, it does seem to me that you have in the College a base from which to operate if you can use that base properly and effectively. So if there are positive messages they are sitting here, and if they are not sitting here then if I come back to investigate what happened to Australian education in two or three years time my prizes for pessimism may be more extensive and more widespread. This is where it seems to me it has to start.

A final comment is that I think you have at this conference ignored your history. History is not common sense, you may not have discussed your recent political and educational past because you felt that you could take it for granted. But you cannot take history for granted and I would

have liked to detect more of a sense of why you are where you are now and why the rest of us are in the positions that we are. There has been a tendency to write off the 1960's and 1970's as a joke, as that period of affluence that is over, as the archives. Life is not like that any more, and yet life is like that any more, because what we did in the 1960's and 1970's in America with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, with Head Start, with Follow Through, with Upward Bound and all of those, what we did in Britain in the same period with our Educational Priority Areas and our Urban Aid, — was to change the context of educational discussion. Your assumptions about education are not the same as when you started your careers and mine are not the same as when I started mine. We have changed the kind of cultural traditions in which education is discussed. Education has come to be seen in relation to wider social forces, contexts, pressures, demands, and although we have not solved the problems we may have solved more of them than we know. The people who wrote off Head Start, following the Westinghouse evaluation, as unsuccessful are now probably going to have to eat their words. In Britain with our Educational Priority Areas and education, we have not used those strategies elegantly enough and we have made false assumptions about the nature of the people for whom they were designed. Nevertheless we have changed something and I would have liked to hear some resonance of why the themes of this conference are being debated in the way they are. Some of the papers presented have been aware of this context. I found it very valuable to read Denise Bradley's account of how the women's movement came to be at the stage that it is. I was interested in John Barrie's attempt to ask what we mean by conservatism but to ask the question historically. Mal Hewitson also, in looking at the question of teacher accountability, considered some of the recent panaceas that have been looked for in an attempt to find increased teacher effectiveness. You cannot escape some kind of analysis of the last ten or twenty years, in order to provide what we need to inject effectively in our discussions — that is, a way of finding points of intersection between the history that we are and the models and maps and the diagrams that we have to make it order to understand the present. Those diagrams and maps and theories have very little relevance for me unless they can be seen to be interesecting with the historical processes which account for why we are at the place that we are now at.

Finally, then, may I say that the conference seems to me to have tangled with a range of extremely useful themes as part of the overall territory. I think that Australians have something to learn from the kind of discussion that we have been having in Europe and North America but you have a different kind of experience, you have a different set of structures, and you have something important to give back to that international dialogue. I for one have benefited enormously from, I hope, understanding more closely the Australian context within which these issues are now being debated. I hope that the momentum of discussion and action that I refer to is continuous as a result of the conference, and if I were able to come back in a couple of years' time in order to see in which directions you have gone I hope that I would be able to say that the conference was not only enjoyable, but was also useful — and fruitful.

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